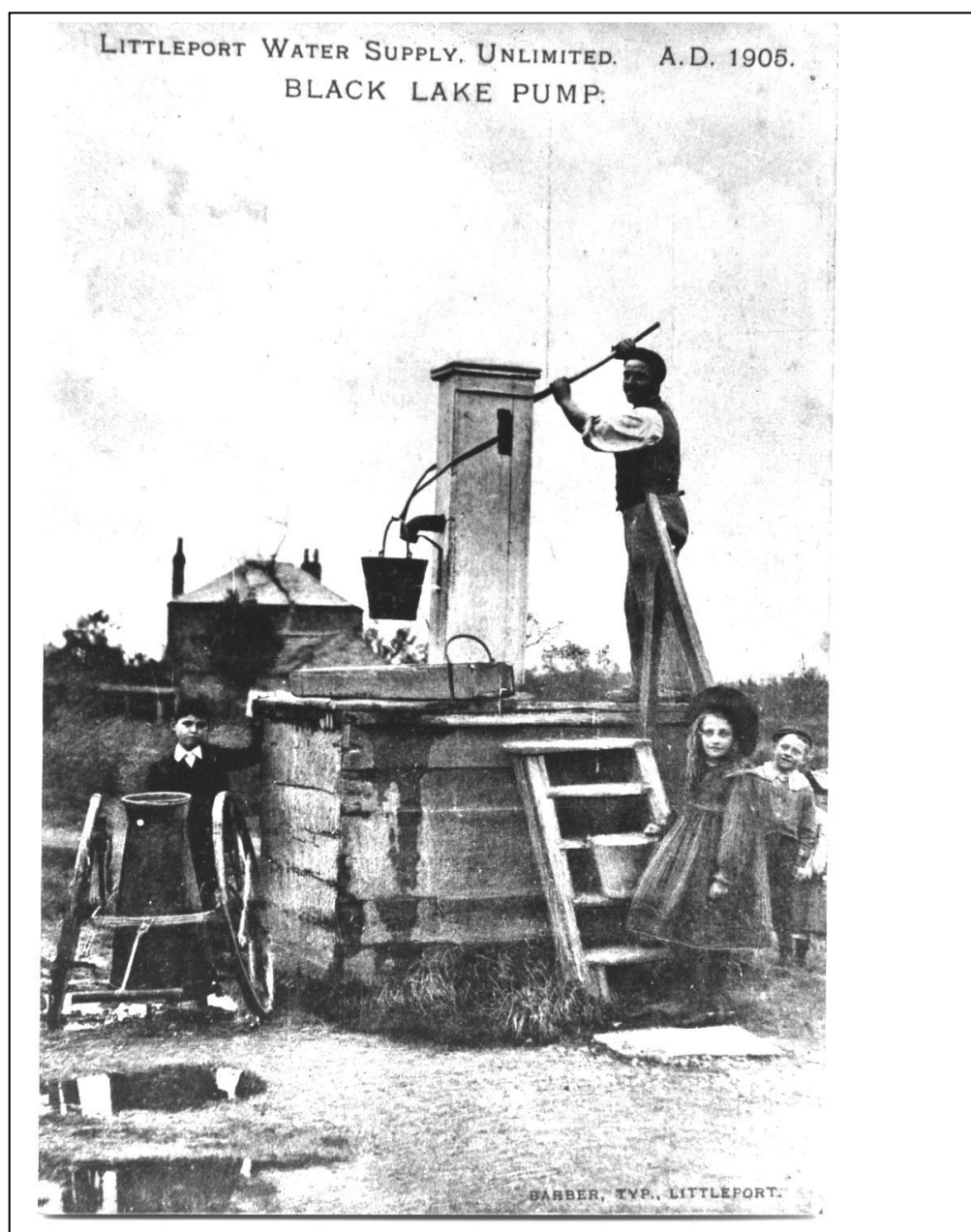


Cambridgeshire Water Supplies Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty



Cambridgeshire Water Supplies Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the
Cambridgeshire Weekly News, its sister title.

They are supplemented by some articles published in the
Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

Most were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at
bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in
touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library
where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the
1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2017

1897 05 08

The new Waterworks at Haverhill have now been opened. The well is dug 103 feet. The pumping of water is done by two gas engines. All the main points of the working can be seen in the engine-room by means of gauges, thus preventing any oil or dirt getting into the well; and as nothing comes in contact with the water but pure air, no contamination whatever is possible

1897 06 21

Sir, - The drought menace is causing alarm among the various water undertakings in the country and the Ministry of Health points out the dangers of droughts, especially when they occur in two successive years. Should an Inspector come to Cambridge I hope he will find time to visit Milton-road tennis courts, where he will find gallons of water wasted. From early morning till late at night men are spraying water on the courts. The time may come, and come soon, when water may have to be rationed. Why does the proprietor of the courts not buy a few water carts and give the unemployed a job to cart the water from the river, instead of using water that may be needed for domestic use? - letter from A.E Stubbs

1897 11 05

Fenstanton well / pump, p3

1898 07 30

Royston new water works, p3

1898 07 27

Newmarket rural council was told that the water supply of Swaffham Prior was derived from springs, and was abundant and naturally pure. All that was necessary was to see that it was properly safeguarded. Some of the existing wells were so circumstanced that they ran the risk of contamination. Four bored wells would be sufficient for the village and one more for the hamlet of Reach. Only one outbreak of diphtheria had occurred in the village, in 1894, when four cases occurred in one house, but analysis of the water supply showed that it was pure and fit for drinking purposes

1898 08 10 c

Newmarket Rural district council were told that at Cheveley a well which had been cleaned out and deepened, now yielded as good a supply as water as could be found. They should consider the desirability of employing an experienced well sinker who could clean out and deepen many of the wells in the neighbouring parishes. A good water supply might be obtained in that way without the expense of digging and sinking artificial wells.

1898 08 12

St Ives public pump, police & council

1898 08 30

Royston is almost approaching a water famine, owing to the wells of the Water Company being extremely low through the continued drought. It may be news to them to know that in a cottage not a hundred miles from Kneesworth Street, which has been unoccupied for some time, a tap has been pouring forth water for the past month. It would be well for the company to give this instance their attention and thus relieve the parishioners of the anxiety which would prevail at the rumour of the mere appearance of a water famine

1898 09 08

At Saffron Walden Town Council Mr Midgley made an inquiry as to the water supply, and questioned whether it would not be well to check the too free use of water in gardens. The surveyor stated that the water was not so high in the well as it had been by about two feet, but it was not so low as in 1897. Alderman Gibson said there was no chance of such a thing as a water famine. It must be remembered that they were not getting their water from a reservoir, but from "the bowels of the earth." The surveyor said that the average per day for the population was 15 gallons

1898 09 17

At an inquiry at St Ives the East Hunts Water Company said that for several days there was no supply to the taps. If they erected stand pipes it would be detrimental to their company as their 116 customers would go to the stand pipe for their drinking supply and use other water for cleaning purposes. The medical officer of health said that the pumps had been closed in 1893 as they were polluted with sewage and notices placed on the pumps would be insufficient to prevent people drinking the water. The Vicar said the river was so low that it had prevented a large number of persons from getting the water from the river for sanitary purposes

1898 09 21

An inquest was held at Cardinal's Green, Shudy Camps, touching the death of a child of seven years. Her mother said the child had complained of sickness. For dinner she had beef, pudding and potatoes and drank water fetched from a pond in the garden. It was the only water supply for drinking purposes in that part of the parish. There was no pump, well, or other supply of water. Doctor Jones said that the water was most dangerous, full of injurious microbes, and ought never to be used, even for washing domestic utensils, without being first boiled. Linton district council were told they should take immediate steps to cause a good supply of water to be effected

1898 09 30

Melbourn rural district council were told that Mr Ingold had examined the deep well at Chishall and reported that he could see nothing to account for the water being impure, accepting from rust from chains and buckets. They noted that provision was being made by the owners of the Wilkes estate for increasing the supply of water in the existing reservoirs. They did not think it advisable to proceed with the Bull pond scheme as they believed that no satisfactory permanent supply of water for drinking can be obtained from any ponds or surface water, and that it is now necessary to make arrangements to provide a supply from a public well

1899 01 14

Sir - I should like to know how it is the children who come over a mile to Girton school cannot be provided with a little water to drink, as there is a well and a pump not 50 yards from the school doors. Some of the cottagers compare its water to Monkey Brand soap - it is not fit to wash clothes. If you put it in a copper and boil it there is a scum like yeast. It is no use letting the water be consumed and disease spread - Neptune

1899 01 23

Sir - there are many schools that have no water supply at all on their own premises, where the children have to depend on "kind and motherly" neighbours who are good enough to attend to the children's wants in this respect. I do not know how many children attend Girton school but can only feel amazed at the task of the kind neighbour who was equal to the work of filtering and supplying the thirsty little throats of the village school children during such a drought as we experienced in 1898. She is undoubtedly well worthy of an honourable position in the annals of Girton - Rusticus

1899 01 25

Sir - your correspondent appears to forget that where there is a village school there is generally a village. The children obtain at home most of the water they drink. In the dinner hour and in the intervals in the midst of morning and afternoon school, the thirsty little ones can, as a rule, run to their parents' house for what they require. There is ample supply always ready for the little scholars from a distance, who eat their dinners on school premises, and at other times no really thirsty child is sent away empty. It should be remembered that the hottest weather generally occurs in the harvest holidays. During the time I have been a manager of the school at Girton, I have never had a complaint about the water supply from child, or parent or teacher. It is unfortunately true that many children come to our school in a very dirty condition - J D Lawrence

1899 03 07

At a meeting at Girton for electing parish councillors the schoolmaster raised the question of the parish pump and remarked that the state of affairs with regard to the water supply was disgraceful, more than one-third of the houses having either no water supply or water unfit to drink and as the council had taken no steps to remedy the matter they were guilty. Cries of "Puppy soup", "Cesspool drainings" etc were frequently heard

1899 04 28

Ely council heard that at Littleport all well water was condemned for drinking purposes, the only supply left being the river. Many houses were not provided with water tanks or cisterns, and many instances water was actually being sold for weeks in dry weather, when there was no rain. This rain water was subject to contamination from birds and smoke, and required filtering to be palatable and safe. No doubt the outlay for a pure water supply would cause a little outcry at first, but advantages would far surpass the disadvantages and additional rates

1899 09 20

Newmarket RDC heard that at Landwade there was a pump that had been erected by subscription, the piping had never been properly fixed and there was now a leakage. Complaints were made as to the indifferent water supply at Reach. There was a spring of good water near the Delph Bridge, which by reason of its being open was often full of tadpoles and other little animals. If a cover were put over it would be a good source of water. The inhabitants of Kirtling obtained a great deal of their water from a dirty pond. The water to certain homes in Soham was filled with dead cats.

1900 02 07

South Essex Waterworks Company proposal to construct a large reservoir near Melbourn would drain the watershed from which Newmarket obtained its supply. In some nearby villages water was very scarce in summer & in one or two had to be carted about by water carts from a distance. But Mr Segrott said it would be an advantage to have the water a few feet lower in the town. Several could tell of having their cellars flooded. When the Hotel Victoria was built it took an engine weeks working day and night to keep the water down.

1900 03 17

Cambridge people do not seem to mind if their water sources are tapped for the benefit of the people of Essex. A ratepayers' meeting was called but there was present the Town Clerk, his chief clerk and four reporters. Alderman Spalding arrived shortly after and after a quarter of an hour's waiting, business was commenced by the meeting of three. Mr B. Diver then strolled into the room. He was the only unattached ratepayer present. Alderman Spalding addressed the meeting, or rather the reporters. Small as the meeting was the Press was amply represented and he had no doubt there would represent the Cambridge public very faithfully.

1900 03 20

The medical officer of Godmanchester has just issued his report. Eight deaths occurred in children under one year of age. No case of smallpox occurred. The pollution of wells had materially decreased, the removal and disposal of sewage and town refuse was satisfactory, and the sewers were in a fairly good condition.

1900 07 14

Star Yard pump, St Ives, p2

1900 07 19 c

Sir – The birds of prey watching the interest of the East Hunts Water Company have made another pounce and seized the Star Yard pump at St Ives. A large number of persons who have been using this really good supply of water will have their supply cut off. A lad has been found to have diphtheria, and of course it must be this Star Yard pump, while the fact that a child died from the same disease in

Filbert's Walk, where the East Hunts water is laid on, is entirely ignored! When all the pumps have been closed by the minions we shall be obliged to use the river, although it has just now a wonderful stench which that august body does not seem to trouble about – Ratepayer

1900 07 25

Sir – Respecting the Star Yard pump at St Ives. I have drunk its water for many years and never heard the purity doubted before. It has always been the best, or as good as any in the town & it is a shame that the users should be deprived of the water unless by the inexorably exigencies of the health of the public warrant such a privation. If I know anything of my neighbours I believe they would rather have had their parish church seized and closed than their pump – Another Ratepayer

1900 08 01 c

Cottenham Gas and Water Company wrote to say that before they commence laying the mains for the water supply they would like a guarantee that the parish will take a sufficient quantity of water to warrant them doing so. They would erect 33 stand-pipes, 400 feet apart. Mr Wiles said 400 feet was very close together and he did not think the stand-pipes required to be so near each other. 200 yards was a reasonable distance.

1900 08 24

At a meeting of Fenstanton parish council a circular was received with regard to overcrowding. There were cases of eight people with only two bedrooms. The law was perfectly clear; it was for the sanitary authorities to get the matter right. Mr Burt spoke very highly of the work done by the district nurse. She not only showed the people how to do things in a proper manner, but saw they were done, and sometimes did them herself. There would be no difficulty with regard to water supply in the future as in about two months the East Hunts Water Company could supply any amount.

1900 09 15

An inquest was held at Dry Drayton on the body of a seven-year old girl. Her brother said she had been sent to the pond to fetch some water. She was splashing him when she fell on to her face in the water & went under. Two men got her out, but she was dead. It was the only water supply for nearby houses and it was customary to send children to fetch it. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

1900 09 18

Newmarket rural council heard that at Bottisham the difficulty had been to get at an adequate supply of water in the village, as the geological formation was against it. The wells that had been dug along a part of the village were simply cesspools, as they were dug into the chalk marl into which the sewage and surface water ran and remained. The marl was not a water-bearing strata and water might lay deep. The well at the police station, for example, was 224 feet deep and cost £101 to sink.

1900 10 16

Three cases of typhoid have occurred at Exning. The first was in a house in the Malting Yard, the second was of a person who had called at the house where the original outbreak occurred, and the third case was next door. The water from a well had been analysed and ought not to be used for drinking purposes if better could be obtained. The Waterworks main passed the door and a connection should be made for a supply. The water could be purified by boiling but poor people have not got the time and coal is too dear for that. The sanitation in the house was in a dreadful state and the place quite unfit for habitation.

1900 10 26

In considering a supply of water to Littleport the Inspector said the population would require 50,000 gallons per day. The available rivers ran for a considerable length through the fens and were used as main outfall drains for the pumping engines which pumped water from the adjoining fen lands. It was obvious that any water would be subject to pollution by peaty water from the pumping stations. The waters of the Little Ouse, if taken at the end of White Hall Drove, would prove the most suitable but

would still be of doubtful quality. Whatever source was chosen there should be a service reservoir near the main road to Ely

1900 11 28

An Inspector of the Local Government Board held an inquiry at Cambridge Guildhall with reference to the application of the Town Council to borrow £15,500 for the provision of a new cemetery at a spot near Fen Ditton. Dr Cooper said there was a good deal of talk and it was of the utmost importance to the inhabitants that the formation of the new cemetery would not in the slightest degree be of risk to the purity of the water supply of the town

1900 12 10

An accident occurred at Witchford whereby a boy was killed. The deceased accompanied a yardman with a water cart for the purpose of getting a supply of water at the end of the village. This having been accomplished, the return journey was commenced. On the way, the lad, who was eight years old, fell off the heavily-weighted cart and one of the wheels passed over his head. When he was picked up it was found that he was dead.

1901 01 09

Mr Luddington said that people might think Littleport was a plague-infested place – (Mr Cutlack: So it is). There was nothing to prevent typhoid germs floating down the river from Ely, while the fen engines were constantly pouring in water that was impure. There was the flood time and the time when the reeds were cut and allowed to lie in the water and stink. Let them look up the river that day and ask themselves if the water was fit to drink.

1901 01 18

A Littleport parish meeting was held to consider the matter of the water supply attracted a large assembly. The clerk reported on three schemes – an independent supply from Beck Row, a supply from the River Lark, and a supply from Ely. Without the proposed reservoir and the fire hydrants the work could be carried out for £5,000. It was for the meeting to decide whether to have water for a favoured few or go to the whole parish. Most of the cases of typhoid had occurred against the drain that came down Black Bank, but there were some cases at Red Cow Drove.

1901 02 26

During the past year two thirds of the water supply to Saffron Walden has been provided from the new bored well. The council has accepted tenders for the supply of a Worthington pump, rendering a breakdown nearly impossible and giving a plentiful supply of pure water, sufficient for their requirements for some years to come. The South Essex Water Board's plan to abstract water would entirely dry up some of the springs and streams feeding the river Cam and petitions had been presented opposing them.

1901 06 20

Chesterton R.D.C. heard that Harlton was not badly supplied with water but a few houses were situated on the gault and could not obtain a supply except from the green sand at a considerable depth, from the spring at Bulter's Spinney which would have to be raised by some motor or from the church from which the greater part of the village is supplied. They should search for a disused well indicated as existing on Monk's land in the angle near Yew Tree Gate and make experimental boring at three places.

1901 07 11

St Ives council heard the condition of the water was unsatisfactory. There was a sufficient supply in the pipes but it was thick and highly discoloured, so much so that consumers preferred not to use it. The Company was under obligation to supply pure, wholesome water, unless prevented by frost. They could proceed to arbitration as to whether the quality was unsatisfactory, and these would be expensive proceedings

1901 08 05

Suggestions that the model cottage is not so comfortable as the old-fashioned thatched dwellings must not be accepted without some qualification. Surely nobody will contend that the thatched cottage, with a low roof and a ladder for a staircase, is more comfortable than the brick cottage. Very few have inspected the model cottage on Mr Crisp's estate at Girton or they would not have committed themselves to such an unfortunate pronouncement. It is nothing short of a grave scandal that such large centres as Cottenham, Swavesey and Soham are in danger in the summer of suffering from a short water supply.

1901 11 29

Chesterton RDC considered the provision of an adequate water supply for Cottenham to remedy the unsatisfactory system of carrying water round in a water cart. It was one of the largest villages, with a population of 2,500 and should have a supply commensurate with its needs. They regretted that a scheme proposed six months ago had broken down and wished it could now be carried out. A meeting favoured spending £20 in erecting a standpipe at the end of Broad Lane supplied with water from a well on the premises of the Crown Trading Company, but this was too small of make it pay as a private enterprise.

1902 01 02

Chesterton RDC received a resolution from Longstanton All Saint's parish meeting that members of property in the parish should provide their tenants with water. In every case the landlords had agreed. The Clerk: "We supply water by water carts; the contracts expires at the end of the month & it is thought that the owners should now provide it". The council agreed to continue the water cart system for three months to give landlords the opportunity to supply their tenants with water.

1902 01 09

The Rev Weston of Orwell appeared before the Rural District Council with regard to the village water supply. The well had been filled up about 14 years ago at the request of the parish council. Previous to that there was a good supply of water, which was used for drinking purposes. He asked that it be reopened or that another should be dug. What did it matter whether the Parish Council want water or not? The people want water. If they refuse then the RDC should do it. A committee was appointed to go over to Orwell and investigate the matter.

1902 06 19

A giant mushroom has just been grown at Cottenham. This marvellous agaric measures over four feet in circumference, weighs over four pounds and is of perfect shape. Mushrooms exhibit a special preference for damp localities so hopes may be entertained that the question of water supply at Cottenham, which is still unsolved after twenty years, will shortly be brought to conclusion. It is remarkable that a brainless fungus should have so signally succeeded where the combined wisdom of public authorities and private parishioners has so signally failed.

1902 08 09 c

News from Cottenham as to the outbreak of typhoid fever becomes daily more serious. Twelve cases are now reported and in three more persons the disease is suspected. The cases are attributed to the bad water available in the parish for drinking purposes. Whether this latest outbreak will result in some action being taken to give the district a wholesome supply of water we cannot say. One epidemic of typhoid had passed over the village but the warning then given was unheeded and now Nature has taken the matter in hand in her own summary and peculiarly effective manner.

1902 07 30

Cottenham, it would appear, has no desire to spend money upon such a necessary of life as water but is prepared to sanction money for the purpose of providing an illuminated clock tower to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty the King. It is pleasant to see so much loyalty and patriotism, but it would be even pleasanter to see a much greater regard for the elementary principles of sanitation. The village has for the past 18 years wrangled over the water supply question until a

second serious outbreak of typhoid. The matter is, of course, one for Cottenham people but we could have hoped they would regard pure water as of even greater importance than illuminated clocks

1902 12 18

Cambridge Water Company sued Messrs Kerridge and Shaw for water supplied for a building in course of construction in Rose Crescent, Cambridge. The supply recorded by a water meter had increased from 78,000 gallons one quarter up to 220,000 gallons the next. A new meter was installed and consumption fell. They claimed the old meter must have got out of order. But it was quite possible considering the number of taps they were using that one was left running and the water wasted.

1903 02 24

Wilburton Parish Council drew attention to the ruinous condition of Twenty-pence Ferry Drawbridge, the owner of the bridge refusing to do any repairs to it. They think it desirable that a permanent bridge be put up. But it was a public road on one side of the ferry and a private one on the other. It was not a connection between two public roads. Wentworth people again recommended that the well at the end of the village should be deepened to the extent of 15 ft. But pumping machine would then be required and the water would have to be filtered before it was used for drinking purposes. People were willing to pay the money. Samples of water from both wells in the village had been condemned for drinking purposes

1903 04 24

Chesterton RDC heard that Cottenham had got a full supply of water. They were obliged to supplement the supply with the old water cart. It seemed bad they should be paying both the water company and the man who owned the cart. The Clerk said that he wrote to the man and told him to discontinue but was informed that he had a contract for 12 months, and would expect the money, so he might as well use the cart. The contract was only up to the time when a proper water supply was obtainable but the new pipes had discoloured the water and it was not quite fit for drinking purposes. The Inspector of Nuisances (Mr Bunnett) was authorised to obtain a sample of water for analysis.

1904 03 04

The drinking fountain for cattle and animals erected opposite Haverhill council schools in Station Road was formally handed over to the town by the secretary of the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association on behalf of the donor, Lady Malcolm of Poltalloch. The structure, composed of the finest grey Aberdeen granite, is in the form of a circular basin standing on eight columns, the base forming a channel for the use of small animals. It is fitted with an automatic water apparatus which ensures a constant supply. At the conclusion of the ceremony a bystander filled a glass with water from the fountain and drank the donor's health, but as snow was falling, the example he set was not followed.

1904 03 31

Sir – I must protest against the sanitary inspector's report on the pump on Barrington green. All the people living near it and having horses use it and have done so since the year dot. The water is not any worse now than it was then. If the inspector were to visit some of the cottages and make the owners keep them in a thoroughly sanitary condition, instead of trying to upset old customs, it would be better for the village. But there is the old story, 'I must not upset my masters', who are generally the owners – A Villager

1904 04 08

An inquiry was held into the promotion of the Meldreth and Melbourn District Gas and Water Company Bill; it aroused a deal of opposition and at times the exchanges were of a very lively character. The present Gasworks at Melbourn were not up-to-date and with growing demand a new company had been formed who would erect new gasworks in Meldreth; there had been no objection from residents. Water supplies were obtained from the river and wells and a good supply would enhance the value of property. There would be a pumping station near Melbourn Heath Farm and a

200,000-gallon reservoir. The County Council supported the scheme but the Parish and District Councils objected

1904 12 08

Caxton Medical Officer reported that he had analysed the water in the reservoir at Graveley which was highly contaminated and unfit for drinking purposes. It was the only place from which to obtain water but was open to all pollution. He suggested wells be sunk in different parts of the village, a course which had been adopted at Yelling with success. Abundant water could be obtained at about a depth of eight feet. One councillor said they should wait until the parish had a meeting to which another replied: "I know if we have a public meeting we shan't get the water. They will go against it". But even if the parish was not in favour the responsibility of a good supply of water rested on the R.D.C

1905 05 13

Residents in Soham have to 'fetch a pail of water' from the public pump when they need it. But Mrs Brown of Bushel Lane complained: "It was a great trial to me. My back was so weak that carrying the pails would send pains through it of an excruciating character. It was when my first girl was born that I became so very ill. She was a very weakly baby and fretted continually. I became so knocked-up that I had to have someone in to do my housework. One night my husband returned to find me in a pitiable plight. Then I decided to take Dr William's Pink Pills and I have not been ill since". 05 05 13

1905 07 15

Mr J.A Martin of Ely said the water supply of the country was a most difficult question. In the fen district the rivers constituted the main supply and every precaution ought to be taken to keep them free from contamination. If they could utilise the water out of the rivers they would have as good a supply as they could wish. Mr Luddington of Littleport said many of the inhabitants turned to the river for their supply but the city of Ely poured crude sewage into the stream above them. 05 07 15a-d

1905 07 25

Littleport Parish Council considered a report on the outbreak of typhoid in the village in 1904. Their natural water supply was from the river but Ely council was now planning to discharge a large quantity of extra sewage into the Ouse. A piped water supply was said to be too expensive and nobody would give them a direct reply to their enquiries. 05 07 25b

1906 03 28

Dr Bushell Anningson has served as Cambridge Medical Officer of Health since 1875. Then the whole sewerage was most unsatisfactory and 800 houses in Sturton Town had only middens and cesspools. 2,000 houses had no water supply other than pumps or wells – in many cases contaminated with sewage – and there were no arrangements to cope with a serious epidemic. Household refuse was collected by private individuals who did the work for what they could get out of it. They used donkey carts which were emptied in their own backyards in the neighbourhood of Gas Lane where it was examined for saleable material such as bones and cinders. 06 03 28a

1906 04 04

According to a Government expert who was sent down to inquire into last year's outbreak of typhoid at Fulbourn there is a 'potentiality of danger' that the water supply of Cambridge might become contaminated with the Asylum sewage. Their present system is antiquated - it is irrigated over grass land and may percolate through the soil into the vast subterranean lake beneath from which the Water Company pumps their supplies. We do not want even the 'potentiality of danger': the public health is too serious a matter about which to take any risks whatever. 06 04 04

1906 04 24

News that the Cambridge water supply might be polluted by sewage from Fulbourn Asylum has spread alarm and is getting the town into disfavour. More than one anxious father or mother as they

read the report in 'The Times' will decide "We must send Jack to Oxford" and we fear that the entrance at the University next academic year will suffer considerably. No trace of contamination has been discovered up to present but even the possible risk must be removed. 06 04 24

1906 06 14

Cambridge water supplies might be polluted from sewage from Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn. Householders use pails for the collection of excreta and if this is spread on the land then the possibility of typhoid organisms finding their way into the water supply must be remote. A more serious menace is the soakage of infected matter from improperly-constructed cesspools and the sewage from the Asylum. Some Cambridge people have started to boil their water 06 06 14a & b

1906 07 04

Sir – many of the wells in Great Chesterford have been closed by the Medical Officer of Health by pasting a printed notice that the well was contaminated and all water should be boiled. These notices were washed off by rain within a few days. The wells should be properly filled up. Now the parish council proposes to construct two bored wells, but this will result in people having to walk a quarter of a mile to draw water. They also vetoed a sewage scheme on cost grounds. This is ridiculous. – G.W. Law 06 07 04

1906 11 22

The corporation steam roller was employed in Bradmore Street when there was a slight subsidence owing to the bursting of a water main near an old brick sewer. The heavy weight of the engine caused a further drop and one wheel became firmly embedded, the roller lying at a dangerous angle on its side. Means are being taken by council employees to remove it and their efforts are being watched with interest by a crowd of people 06 11 22b

1906 12 07

The inhabitants of Stretham have become convinced that there is more water in the village than they had ever imagined. Mr J. Wesley has no supply on his engineering works and persuaded Mr B. Tompkins, the expert water finder, to make a survey. Holding a 'divining rod', consisting of an ordinary hazel twig, he traced the courses of various streams and eventually found that four of them converge on the lawn of Mr Wesley's own house. 06 12 07a & b & c

1907 02 11

Newmarket councillors considered advertising the town's advantages as a residential resort. Their drainage system was one of the best, they never had any complaint about the water supply and the refuse destructor had already destroyed hundreds of tons of garbage. No other town was quieter, had less prostitution, drunkenness or rioting. Here they might see the most notable personages in the world to whom Newmarket was especially agreeable because they could go to and fro with the absence of all pomp and state. But they wanted more seats for invalids along the roads and there was very little amusement 07 02 11 & 11a

1907 02 13

While a loaded coal wagon was passing along Mawson Road the surface suddenly sank about two feet and it became firmly fixed in the trench. When a Great Eastern wagon, also loaded, attempted to pass another portion of the road subsided. Its wheels sank to such a depth that jacks had to be employed to remove them. It was due to a broken water main. 07 02 13

1907 04 27

It is alleged that Hobson's Stream is being 'tapped' by some unauthorised body and the supply of water for public purposes is fast diminishing. Not so. To restore its former volume it simply needs flushing. Water comes from Shelford to the conduit in as plentiful a supply as ever but it is many years since the pipe which feeds the Market Hill fountain was adequately flushed and an accumulation of rubbish prevents it receiving the amount of water it should. There is some difficulty in deciding whether the town council or the Hobson's Charity are responsible, but the cost would not exceed £5.

1908 02 29

An inquiry into Cambridge water supplies heard that the bulk of the sewage from the female side of Fulbourn Asylum was disposed of in the Rectory Field and that from the male to the west. This was found to be faulty, very faulty. In 1905 there was a serious outbreak of typhoid fever at Asylum with some 70 cases and 16 deaths after which Dr Copeman investigated. He did not want to be alarmist but an inquiry into possible sewage contamination would reassure the public. 08 02 19 & 20

1908 06 12

Stetchworth waterworks are costing too much money and are not satisfactory, the parish council claimed. Percy Pamphilon should be appointed to run it: he is a practical engineer with ten years' experience in all sorts of pumps and is now running Bluten's light plant for the Earl of Ellesmere. But when the works were first established they had great difficulty in getting anybody to manage them and the existing engineer, Mr Hobbs, should have the opportunity of answering the charges. CWN 08 06 12 p6

1908 06 12

The Sanitary Committee recommended that a well should be sunk at the end of Bar Lane, Stapleford at a cost of £50, but residents petitioned against it. The well was not required and would impose a rate, the complained. The matter arose out of an old report; there had been no trouble with the water recently and if a well was sunk it would not be used. But the water had been analysed and found to be bad. It was referred to the Parish Council to decide what to do. 08 06 12 p8

1908 10 02

A nurse at Fulbourn Asylum had died from typhoid fever: she was in the habit of drinking the water unboiled and a specimen had been sent to be bacteriologically examined. A scheme for the improvement of the disposal of sewage had been suggested but not yet carried out. The nurses were lunacy trained and not competent to nurse a case of enteric fever. Patients were treated in the Asylum infirmary but the attendants were moved as early as possible to Addenbrooke's Hospital. CWN 08 10 02 & 08 10 02 p5

1908 11 17

Caxton Guardians were told of a case of diphtheria in a cottage at Orwell. They heard that the cost of purifying Hardwick water would be £40: it was worse than before, and something must be done. There had also been another burglary at the Isolation Hospital. The knives had been taken away and the intruder had slept in the nurses' bed. (Laughter). CWN 08 11 17 p3

1918 11 20

Following a complaint that water could not be got from the pump between the Red Lion and the allotments at Cheveley, Mr Graystone went to investigate. The source of supply was a field fifty yards away where he found an offensive-looking pond. The water was an inky colour and covered with green duckweed. It looked altogether horrible. There were lots of rats living in the pond. But the water was not meant for drinking; it was just for slopping purposes and there should be a notice to that effect. There had never been a case of typhoid arising from it. CWN 08 11 20

1908 12 11

Government Inspectors say a large source of Cambridge water should be abandoned as it is dangerous to the lives and health of the inhabitants. It had been suggested that contamination came from Fulbourn Asylum sewage but the experts say the danger comes from the villages of Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn where the method of sewage disposal are at the very least primitive. Even if sewage was excluded from the present leaky sewers it would still be disposed of in cesspools and there is no certainty that these would not leak. CWN 08 12 11

1909 06 11

Swavesey ratepayers were told that the present water supply had been condemned at its source and was unhealthy. The alternatives were to pump water from the river Ouse, filter it and store it in a

reservoir or obtain a piped supply from the East Hunts Waterworks. The cost had been exaggerated and when the new system was working everybody would be pleased. But, if the water was impure, why had there been no illness and why did people live to such a great age in the parish? Mr Thomas Prior said he had come to the meeting to oppose it but found he could not do so. 09 06 11

1909 06 25

The pump in Middle Watch, Swavesey is in a worse condition than ever. It used to be necessary to put down water (obtained from a pond or water butt) once a day to induce the bucket to act; now water has to be poured down each time it is used. This disregard of the health and convenience of residents seems inexplicable and the council should act. 09 06 25

1909 07 02

Swavesey pump – 09 07 02

1909 08 20

Boxworth boys thought drowned in pond, village pump out of order – CWN 09 08 20

1909 11 05

Some 18 years ago there was an outbreak of typhoid in Fen Ditton and most of the private wells were condemned. Two new wells were sunk at Green End and on the site of the old village Pound. For a while all went well but then the water grew dirty and began to fail until villagers had to eke out supplies by courtesy of those with private wells. They must sink another well or arrange a supply of piped water, a meeting was told. CWN 09 11 05

1906 11 05

Cottenham previously obtained its water from three surface wells and distributed it through earthenware pipes. But a soldier on furlough, who was a convalescent from typhoid fever but still a 'carrier' of the disease germs, came to visit his relatives in a cottages near one of the sources of supply and soon contaminated it. The infection was carried to 35 householders, six of whom died. Now many of the larger houses have water laid on, the Medical Officer reported. CWN 09 11 05

1910 03 04

Since the inauguration of County Councils 21 years ago they have grown enormously in importance and in power. Their responsibilities over public health, sanitation, water supply and the administration of the Poor Law will probably be increased in the new future. This throws the administration more and more into the hands of the officials. Ratepayers should take care to select their representatives but unfortunately the absurd practice still prevails locally of voting for councillors according to their political predilections and the best man is frequently defeated. 10 03 04e

1910 04 15

Cambridge Waterworks Company's Bill passed by select committee of the House of Lords. It would allow for the sinking of a new well outside the polluted area. But if the prehistoric methods of sewage disposal in villages been corrected the whole problem could have been ended. 10 04 15

1910 04 15

Cambridge University & Town Waterworks Company Bill examined by House of Lords – 10 04 15c & d

1910 07 15

Swavesey Parish Council told an Inquiry into the village water supply they had never known a shortage and had one of the best springs for miles around. It might be impure just after flood but that was just once in 20 years and there had not been an instance of water causing an illness in the parish. But the RDC said there were four wells, all fed from the Black Horse well, which supplied the lower end of the village. It was highly polluted with sewage and quite unfit for drinking purposes. The rest had no public supply and in dry summers they had to cart water. 10 07 15d & 15f

1910 08 26

Longstanton cottagers living in the vicinity of the public pump known locally as "Chapman's" have a grievance. There is another a pump on private property close by, fed from the same public supply and when there is a heavy call on this (it is used to fill a tank about three times a week) the yield from "Chapman's" is very scanty indeed. Both parties claim priority of usage and neither is inclined to give way. If the council want to avoid unpleasantness they should step in now 10 08 26d

1910 09 23

Painful scenes were witnessed at Little Downham during an open-air baptism in the Pit pond in Cannon Street. This is a shallow pond chiefly used for watering horses and washing carts. The Minister, who had a pair of waders reaching over the knees, was immersing a woman when her husband suddenly arrived and endeavoured to prevent the ceremony being performed. He walked into the water and great consternation prevailed among the members of the Baptist community present until he was restrained by the village policeman. Afterwards there was an angry scene as he upbraided his wife for acting so, against his wishes. The affair was witnessed by a large crowd and still remains almost the sole topic of conversation. 10 09 23h

1910 10 07

An extensive stack fire broke out on the premises of Messrs Pearson Bros, the well-known horse breeders at Mepal. Most of the men were working on the land but the women, greatly to their credit, proved equal to the occasion. Leaving their homes, they hurried to the fire equipped with pails and anything else that might answer the purpose. So hard did the women work that the wells were soon dried up and the river at Mepal Bridge was resorted to, several neighbours lending their water carts to fetch supplies. Stock including three valuable stud horses and 23 calves were rescue from the blazing stables. 10 10 07g

1910 12 23

The Medical Office said cottages in Graveley were kept in a clean and healthy condition and there was no case of overcrowding. The water supply was from a reservoir well though one or two on the Offord Road got their water from a spring. There was no regular system of drainage and the slop water passed into the dykes on the roadside. But there were some things that required attention such as unsound roofs and the levelling and paving of yards 10 12 23a b

1911 03 10

There are still a number of houses at St Ives supplied by surface wells and after the late floods there were many cases of diarrhoea. In every case the water supply came from these surface wells. There is no doubt that the sewage is driven back by the rising water in the subsoil and contaminates the wells. It is fortunate that the drains were not infected with such a disease as typhoid or there would have been a bad epidemic. The wells should be inspected and if infected they should be closed, the Medical Officer reported. 11 03 10e

1911 04 28

Considerable damage was caused to the pumping engine which supplies water to the reservoir on Mr C.P. Allix's Swaffham House estate. One of the feed pipes to the oil engine broke and in an instant two gallons of oil burst into flame. Swaffham Prior fire engine was brought up as quickly as possible but the fire spread with great rapidity and the shed became a total wreck. The engine has suffered extensive damage and will not be in working order again for some time 11 04 28d

1911 04 28

An Inspector's report on Cambridge Workhouse criticised arrangements in the sick ward, the dietary, bathing arrangements and care of children. The sick ward contained 25 male and 28 females with only one partially trained nurse and a woman who came in to sit up at night. The majority of the bed-ridden cases were helpless and a great deal of the actual nursing was done by paupers. There were no modern

conveniences and the female side top floor had only a drinking water tap fixed over a basin. A new midwifery ward had been erected with no sink or hot and cold water 11 04 28e

1911 08 18

The dry weather has led to great scarcity of water in many parts and if the drought continues the Army planned manoeuvres might be abandoned. The brooks and ponds in many places are completely dry, rivers are running lower than in living memory and farmers are at their wits' end to know how to provide water for their cattle. Water trains will soon have to be organised though unfortunately some of the worst villages on the clay hills of Huntingdonshire are remote from the railways. However at most seaside places nearly every room is occupied and the summer of 1911 will be long remembered as the best on record by boarding-house keepers 11 08 18m

1911 08 25

The longest drought since 1887 has happily come to an end and heavy rains have reduced the torrid heat. In Cambridge the hottest day was August 9th when the temperature was 95 degrees in the shade. Messrs Pain's records go back 43 years and the only other record of that figure was on 15th August 1876. During violent thunderstorms lightning set fire to farm buildings at Friday Bridge but the brigade was powerless as there was no water due to the prolonged drought. 11 08 25a

1911 09 08

The absence of a proper water supply in many villages has long been a reproach to Sanitary Authorities. Fen villages have been hard put to find sufficient water for drinking, let alone for washing and sanitary purposes. Brooks and wells have failed and the precious liquid has had to be fetched from a distance and doled out at so much per bucketful. This has happened at Pampisford where fourpence a bucketful has been charged. Modern engineering ought to remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs. 11 09 08c

1911 09 15

The want of water is being seriously felt in Swavesey. All the ponds are practically dry and private pumps are running short. Several farmers have had the new water supply laid on to their yards and fields, and have derived great benefit thereby. The public pumps of the old water supply, hitherto only allowed to be drawn upon for domestic purposes, have been used for farm purposes and have allowed many farmers to obtain water for stock which otherwise have to have been fetched from the river. 11 09 15e

1911 10 27

The Medical Officer reported that the wife of the landlord of the Golden Lion at Bourn had fallen ill with typhoid. He had tested the water supply and found nothing wrong with it. He was told that she had eaten some mussels and was of the opinion that this was the cause. This was no uncommon occurrence. 11 10 27 also water supply Eltisley, Croxton, Papworth area 11 10 27

1911 11 24

The Intelligence Department of the War Office have been busy making a minute return of everything likely to be of use in case of war. The number of horses available, places suitable for camps, locality of wells, blacksmiths' shops and farms have all been noted. Cambridge would be a great medical base and a Red Cross hospital would receive medical and surgical cases from all the county hospitals in East Anglia. The headquarters of the surgical division would be at King's College and the medical wards in the Senate House. The nurses would be quartered in Downing College. 11 11 24c

1911 12 29

Two Fen Ditton labourers were charged with stealing a lead pump. John Thornton of Quay Water Farm said it had been taken from his yard. He went to a marine store dealer's on East Road and there saw the pump cut up in lengths. The dealer said he'd bought it from a man who said it was of no more use. The accused admitted the theft but claimed they'd been drunk at the time and dare not take it back. They recompensed the farmer for its loss. 11 12 29a

1912 01 12

The year 1911 was notable in Swavesey. A new water supply was peacefully laid on in spite of meetings and threats of angry opposition. The water appears to have given satisfaction, but the cost of it does not. Farmers found it invaluable for the stock when ponds were empty in the prolonged summer drought. Mr C. Wood succeeded H. Beaumont as headmaster but the Bethel Baptist Chapel was pastorless for a lengthy period and the Parish Council was also without a chairman 12 01 12f

1912 01 26

The question of providing an adequate water supply to rural areas is attracting a great deal of attention. One cottage at Caxton stood a quarter of a mile from the village pump and, except for the rain water caught from the roof, they had to carry every drop of water from the pump. The family was a large one and they did their own laundry work, so one could guess how many journeys would be made in the course of a week in the hot, dry weather. Yet they refused to have water laid on and the Parish Meeting had unanimously opposed a supply. However it was the District, not the Parish Council, who was responsible. Old prejudices are deep rooted and a rural population notoriously slow in absorbing a new idea. If they neglected their duty the Medical Officer would bring pressure to bear on them. 12 01 26 d & e & h

1912 02 02

A conference on rural water supplies heard that many villages are supplied with drinking water from shallow wells just a few yards from a leaky cesspool or privy-pit. These often leak: the emptying of such receptacles is very unpleasant work and if they are made water-tight needs doing more frequently so it often happens that a crowbar is used to make a water-tight cesspool leaky. The roofs of average village cottages are scarcely desirable gathering grounds for drinking water but often the water thus collected and stored underground is infinitely safer than from wells and being soft is usually preferred for use in tea making and cooking 12 02 02a Constance Cochrane evidence – 12 02 02b

1912 -3 15

Ely Medical Officer reported that 18 dwellings in Muriel's Court, Willow Walk, Back Lane and Broad Street were unfit for habitation. They were horrible, some were in a filthy, ruinous and insanitary condition, dangerous to health and not fit for pigs or dogs to live in. On Back Hill a cottage with one room upstairs and one down was being rented for three shillings and sixpence a week. Analysis had found the only water available to tenants was highly polluted with sewage. Such conditions should not be allowed to exist 12 03 15e

1912 09 27

Caxton water supply opposed by village – 12 09 27h

1912 10 18

Charles Lack, head of the well-known firm of Messrs Lack & Son, engineers of Cottenham, died peacefully. He possessed an intimate knowledge of the geological strata and has advised various bodies in matters relating to water supply and sewage. A native of Willingham, he showed mechanical abilities of a high order and commenced business in 1871 on the same spot where the works enlarged and equipped on modern lines now stand. Conscientious in all his dealings, he was respected alike by employers and employed. In his home a devoted husband and father, he leaves five daughters and five sons to mourn an irreparable loss 12 10 18l

1913 01 03 CIP

Mepal parish pump in bad condition

1913 01 10 CIP

Danger of open wells

1913 08 29

Prickwillow water main would be laid along the north side of Prickwillow Bank with water tanks and pumps. But the source of supply – somewhere up the River Lark – was unreliable owing to the varying condition of the water and the cost was a good deal more than expected. About 120 children attended Prickwillow school and had no water except what the schoolmaster carried there. Village water contained microbes and smelt very bad but bread was made with it 13 08 29 p7 CIP

1913 10 24

The Isolation Hospital should have a discharging hut. The hut provided two compartments. The patient to be discharged was taken into one, stripped and bathed, the clothes were taken away and disinfected, then taken to the second compartment where the patient dressed. This was one way of avoiding the carrying back of disease to the villages and was absolutely essential. Longstanton residents complained about their water. Fifteen people used a pump fed by water from a spring which required cleaning out. They had to go half-a-mile to obtain drinking water from a public supply 13 10 24 p7 CIP

1913 11 14

County Medical Officer report includes water supply & well improvements

1913 12 05

Lt Downham pump

1914 01 30

It is not surprising that the bad example set by the militant suffragists should incite young village people to mischievous pranks. 'Votes for Women' decorate the rail of a bridge on the road to Milton. Now daubs of black discovered on property at Landbeach would lead one to think that supporters of the feminist cause had been paying a visit. Great annoyance has been caused by the smearing of gates and walls with tar. The iron gates leading into the churchyard have been freely daubed and users of the village pump have, on seizing the handle, found it black and sticky. But the acts have been traced to two lads of previous good character 14 01 30j

1914 05 22

Sir – our village pump, the main water supply for Fen Drayton, has been out of order for two months. In order to get water a pailful carried from home or taken from the polluted brook close by, as to be poured down. We do not know who is responsible for the pump but we hope that if attention is called in the 'News' the Council concerned will have the defect remedied without delay – Correspondent. 14 05 22i

1914 06 12

A new pump has just been placed on the Orwell Road at Barrington by Mr Edward Conybeare who has always taken a great interest in the water supply of the village. Residents in the lower part have hitherto been obliged to go some distance for their water. The pump is the fourth and finest that he has presented to the village. Constructed by Mr H. Newton of Regent Street, Cambridge, it is of lead with a case of oak. There is a rest for buckets under the spout and the water drains off into a ditch near by 1914 06 12 p12

1914 06 19

If Chaucer Road was a newly-made road the council would not allow the owners to build until they had made the road up to the required standard. But if the residents wanted to keep the road private and did not want water and the other benefits of civilisation they had a right to keep as they were, one councillor said. Owners had petitioned against council plans to have the road made up. But in Grange Road, Brooklands Avenue and Selwyn Gardens householders had paid and it was unfair to treat one set of ratepayers differently from another 14 06 19 p3

1914 11 20

The Home Office has authorised the Isle of Ely Chief Constable to enrol up to 300 special constables, some of whom could carry and use firearms. He was to take 'certain actions' on the roads in consequence of the war; the nature of the obstructions to be utilised on the roads left to his discretion and he could obtain additional equipment as necessary. Payment was to be made for subsistence of Boy Scouts rendering assistance to the police. Ely Water Tower continues to be guarded, but what of the bridge – the water main runs across it

1914 11 20

There is no more potent cause of disease amongst soldiers than impure water. When Cambridge became a mobilisation centre and the Sixth Division was camped along the Cam from Jesus Lock to the Pike & Eel, Sims Woodhouse, the Prof of Pathology, took a bucketful of river water, from a spot where the soldiers were bathing and washing their clothes and by experiment turned it into perfectly pure and palatable drinking water. Even water polluted by corpses is made innocuous. It will be surprising if the whole army does not benefit by his research 14 11 20

1914 12 18

A fountain in the ditch by the side of the main road at Harston was originally intended to supply six houses adjacent, but two cottages on the other side of the road and some cottages further away have been in the habit of obtaining water from it. The supply has now failed but the erection of a pump would probably produce a good supply

1920 03 03

Sidney Child, Suffolk water diviner, dies

1921 03 23

Waterworks Company proposed Parliamentary Bill opposed by local authorities – 21 03 23h

1922 05 26

The report went on to state that a shortage of water was experienced at Harston and Great Wilbraham; the supply was depleted by the pumping at the Cambridge Water Company's new works and by the drought. The latter difficulty had now been overcome by the Company fixing four standpipes in the village. Most of the wells at Little Wilbraham failed during the drought. Considerable discussion arose as to the condition of the polluted brook at Histon. It was stated that the people of Histon were living in a "stink pot"

1922 06 07

The monthly meeting of the Newmarket Rural District received a petition from Robert Leonard and 22 others living at The Cotes, Soham, asking the Council to extend the water main an additional three-quarters of a mile. In view of the great shortage of pure water in the locality of Soham and the comparatively close formation of the cottages with their 121 inhabitants, their application was one not only of necessity, but reasonable

1922 06 14

The "pros and cons" of a proposed joint water scheme were reviewed at a public inquiry convened by the Ministry of Health held at Ely. Mr H.J. Martin explained that for the most part the inhabitants of Littleport drank water from the River Ouse. Mr A.K. Campbell put in an analyst's report to the effect that water from the Ouse taken four miles south of Littleport was polluted with sewage and was unfit for drinking purposes. Mr T. Peake: "I would like to remind you that Ely City empties its sewage into the waters which Littleport has to drink; also that last year the rivers were absolutely unfit for drinking purposes - they were stagnant and putrid". A feature of the enquiry was the stout opposition put up by the parishes of Haddenham, Wilburton, Stretham and Little Downham. A solitary supporter from Stretham explained that he did not attend a public meeting there - which was unanimous against the scheme - because had he done so he would probably have been "crucified"

1922 08 14

Cambridgeshire School Medical Officer reported that there was serious restriction in the amount of water available for all purposes in very many villages during last summer. In several both wells and ponds were entirely dried up for periods of six to eight weeks, and water had to be carted several miles, often from districts already rather short. In one village it had been impossible to use water for laundry purposes for six weeks, the meagre supply which was all that could be spared from a neighbouring village being barely sufficient for cooking.

1922 08 22

Of the opinion that the water supplies to the Ely rural district are "unsatisfactory and inadequate" the Ministry of Health consider that a new supply should be provided without delay. The Ministry wrote in reference to an Inquiry in connection with the application of the Rural District Council for sanction to borrow money for the provision of a scheme of water supply. It is understood that the R.D.C. have now arranged for the provision of an additional reservoir at Littleport.

1922 09 21

At a meeting of Ely water-supply committee Mr Laxton raised the question of putting water meters into all gardens in which hose pipes or sprinklers were used. His contention was that the water used should be paid for and the only way of ensuring that was by putting a meter in. Sometimes people went to bed and forgot that the water was left running

1922 09 21

At Ely Urban District Council the advisability of disposing of the Nutholt Close for the purposes of dwelling-houses was considered. They had a programme for 200 houses but of these 20 were erected in Ely and 8 at Stuntney - a meagre quantity. The chairman commented; "Some of the tenders for the houses to be erected on the Prickwillow site are ridiculous". Prices per pair ranged from F. Tucker of Ely at £400, whilst F. Ambrose quoted £750, Hobbs & son of Downham £906.10s.2d and F.W. Edwards of Prickwillow £1,500. A list of houses in Prickwillow to which water was supplied from the new main was laid before the meeting. The committee recommended that in all cases where there was not a sufficient supply of wholesome water on the premises that notices be served to make the necessary connections in order to obtain a supply

1922 10 25

In the small Cambridgeshire village in which I live there has often been a shortage of water in the summer, and on some occasions the only drinking supply has failed altogether for a short time. At some times of the year the pond water is not fit to drink. Last summer the position was very serious. Nearly all the ponds and streams were dry and the drinking supply failed for several weeks. The village people had to depend on the few showers they caught in their tubs and on the dregs of the pond

1923 01 05

Mr Francis told Chesterton Board of Guardians that Oakington was supplied with water from a well on Queens' College Farm. There was an agreement between the trustees of Marsh's Charity and the Council for the pipe to pass through the land. The agreement terminated in 1922 and the Council had been given notice to terminate the agreement which would mean that the whole water supply of the village would be cut off. This would lead to the installation of a new well at the expense of the parish. The Clerk said he thought it was only a matter of rent

1923 05 12

John Manning of Bedford was summoned for using a locomotives on the highway to draw more than three loaded wagons. Superintendent Allen spoke to seeing a traction engine at Barton drawing four loaded wagons. Three wagons were loaded with tackle belonging to roundabouts, and the fourth wagon, bore the words "Water cart". There were five wooden tubs in it, three of which contained coal. Witness told defendant he was only allowed to draw three wagons and a water cart. He said the last was a water cart. Witness asking where the water was, but he could not show it. There was no water in

the wagons for engine purposes. Defendant admitted putting coal on the wagon. He could not carry enough in his bunker for the journey. He was fined 10s.

1923 05 17

At an inquiry into Ely rural council's plans for water supply the engineer said he considered there was sufficient water at Back Road, Mildenhall, to supply the needs of the Ely rural district. He said there would be two water towers, one at Littleport and one at Soham. The inspector mentioned that the water main passed through Little Downham, but that the village was not to be supplied. The engineer: They asked to be left out of the scheme. The inspector: Don't they want it? A voice (emphatically): No. (Laughter)

1923 08 24

The formal opening of the Soham water works took place yesterday. Mr Ransom said that Soham could now boast of a pure water supply, which, in view of the fact that less alcohol was consumed than in bygone years, was very necessary. Many would be grateful for the water and he hoped there would be further applications from the inhabitants, so that all would pay their share of the rates. The site of the water works joins the main road to Fordham. Here has been erected a magnificent water tower, substantially built in red brickwork, which constitutes a landmark for many miles around.

1923 09 07

The inconvenience of having the water supply to their residences disconnected twice in quick succession has been the experience of Romsey town inhabitants, Cambridge. There have been two distinct breakages, both the trunk and the district mains being affected. The residents in the near neighbourhood of the bridge were given a temporary supply by means of a fire brigade hose attached to a hydrant in Devonshire round, the hose being extended over the bridge to Argyle Street. Then unusual scenes were witnessed of people lining up for water. Men, women and children assembled with a varied collection of receptacles and were kept in an orderly queue under the guidance of a police constable. To add to the general inconvenience three pumps in the affected district went dry during the night

1923 09 13

Ely's water tower has gone dry and the whole of the interior is under renovation, drained of every drop of its 330,000 gallons of water, which is a day and a half's supply for Ely City. Water is drawn from the river Ouse into a filter bed, where it is pumped by a steam engine through 1,400 yards of pipes into the tank. The number of bricks in the tower is estimated to be 618,000 the first of which was made by the Dean of Ely in 1854. The wisdom of the Dean showed itself in laying the first brick, and not the last, which is 140 feet above the level of the Ouse

1923 10 14

Ely Urban Council was told that the death rate in the principal places had been much higher than that in the villages. Mr Laxton said "That is because they drink dyke water in the villages". (Laughter). The chairman said 104 fatal cases of cancer had been reported. He thought if anything could be brought to light as to the prevention of this dreadful disease was concerned, it should be done. Two matters that needed attention were the bad sewerage and bad housing. There were 146 houses in the district not fit for habitation.

1924 02 03c

An inquiry was held into establishing a water supply for Dullingham, Brinkley, and Borough Green. In normal times the supply of water to Brinkley was sufficient for their needs. But there was only one pump and in dry seasons the people had to go very early in the morning and wait a long time. Mrs Webb of Dullingham, said they had not been able to get enough water to wash their clothes, and she could not fancy drinking it after she saw a rat going into the well. The rector of Borough Green considered the proposal absurd. There was no public water supply. The majority of the cottages were owned by absolutely poor people, everybody was jolly hard up, and now was not the time to put a large expense for a useless object on the backs of the ratepayers.

1924 02 25c

Ely Rural council received a letter asking if they would be willing to supply the parish of Southery with water, as their supply was unsatisfactory. An arrangement might be made whereby Downham district council laid the main to Littleport bridge and a meter be fixed at Brandon creek bridge and they could have all the water they wanted at 1s. per thousand gallons. Downham could supply all the houses on the route and lay a pipe under the river to supply Black Bank Drove.

1924 04 12c

Newmarket rural council heard that Messrs Lack and sons had completed the boring of the well at Reach, and the water had been analysed and found fit for drinking purposes. It was recommended that the mayor of Cambridge be asked to declare the pump open when he attends to open the Reach fair

1924 04 22c

Six standpipes had been supplied to Fulbourn, when there were 12 houses with their own water supply. These houses had since been sold by the Charity owning them and had passed into different hands. The owner of the house to which one particular pipe was attached objected to it being used by others, and the only course to adopt was to ask the Cambridge Water Company to install a standpipe at the cost of £6 per year. Mr Jackson said there was a pipe within 150 yards of the area concerned, and he could not see why this additional pipe should be a charge on the parish. Other people had to come much further than that

1924 09 01c

The Medical Officer told Newmarket rural council that numerous wells at Soham had been found to be polluted with sewage and unfit for drinking purposes. "At present I have a list of 41 wells all of which have been condemned. As long as these wells are available to the public they will be considered as a potential source of danger. If the council take no action they are accepting a grave responsibility as any may be the starting point of an extensive epidemic of water-borne diseases"

1925 07 04

A device which would prove invaluable in any Cambridge home is the Permutit Household Water Softener. A lecturer said Cambridge water is good except for the large amount of chalk, which is responsible for the hardness of the water. He demonstrated with the aid of the apparatus how hardness could be eliminated and a water produced which was softer than rain water but without its disadvantages.

1925 07 27

Ely R.D.C. received a petition from Haddenham ratepayers protesting at the great inconvenience caused by the want of water for domestic purposes. But Mr Camps said the petition came as a surprise as they had a public meeting to decide whether they should have piped water and 150 electors were present but only one person voted for it. There was a strong feeling against but if the matter could be remedied by cleaning out the wells the people would appreciate the kindness of the council.

1925 08 07

Sawston's sewerage system being in level country it constantly needs flushing and for this purpose the Parish Council has been paying labour. A scheme was now proposed by which water would be raised by windmill pump on land standing in the highest part of the village to flush out the pipes. At Linton people emptied refuse into the gutterways so that the matter ran into the river and accumulated there.

1925 08 12

Ely was nearly dry from noon on Monday to 11am Tuesday owing to the city's water supply from Isleham having been held up through the bursting of a main at Stuntney, where water spouted two feet into the air. Residents were warned by Mr R. Wayman, the city's blind crier, that water should be used carefully. The lower part of Ely was more fortunate as the reservoir on Cambridge Road

contained 80,000 gallons. This was run off at slow pressure and they were kept supplied until about 7 pm.

1925 08 22

The Ely council chairman said he had no idea things were so bad in Haddenham and that people had to walk half a mile to fetch water. Mr Hepher said there was plenty of pure water in the parish, but not a good distribution. It would cost something like £7,000 to take water as far as the Cross Keys and about £10,000 if a supply was taken another mile and some who signed the petition would drop out. Mr Darby said they should consult Haddenham before they enforced the silly expenditure on the village.

1925 08 27

With regard to water supplies in the Newmarket rural district 83 of the 103 water samples taken for analysis were reported to be polluted. In Soham where about 100 houses were supplied from 56 polluted wells, 53 have been connected with the public water main and now of 1,123 structurally separated dwellings 860 are supplied from the mains. At Bottisham 12 samples taken from different wells at the north end of the village all afforded evidence of pollution. In Linton a new public well has been bored into the chalk & consideration has been given to the provision of a new public well at Milton which it is expected will shortly be proceeded with.

1925 08 29

Sir Charles Walston expressed pleasure that the Air Ministry were anxious to avoid pollution of Offa's Brook by petrol or oil from Duxford airfield. For a great many years inhabitants of Newton had drunk the water from the brook & he had never heard of any case of typhoid in the locality. Now by strange coincidence, within a fortnight of the examination of the sewage system of the aerodrome by Ministry experts, two cases of typhoid had occurred. "With all due respect to the expert opinion of these Ministries", he said, "the combination of oil and sewage effluent may be favourable for the breeding of dangerous bacilli"

1925 09 09

Pointed speeches and noise in plenty characterised the public meeting held at Haddenham to discuss the question of a water supply to the village. A few weeks ago a petition signed by over 100 residents was sent asking for a supply. Pandemonium reigned at the back of the room, there being so much noise that speakers could not make themselves heard. The proceedings were temporality transformed into a wordy conflict between leather-lunged 'waterites' and 'non-waterites' near the doorway and it was several minutes before peace was restored. Mr Peacock said he was never out for water just to wash his car and have his bath. They should ask people who had dyke water not good enough to drink about the matter. Mr Camps said that if they wanted water they should have their own reservoir.

1925 10 30

Chesterton RDC was told that it was very well supplied with water but five parishes had no public pumps, three had private supplies and one relied upon artesian wells where they had 13 wells continuously running. They should take powers to prevent that water running to waste. At Stapleford the council had bought land for the erection of houses but the Cambridge Water Company area did not include the village and although the main passed in front of the land they had no right to supply water.

1925 12 23

A referendum was taken in the village of Fordham on the question of providing a public water supply in place of the present methods of landlords supplying their own properties by means of private wells. This was not sufficiently decisive and it was decided to take a poll of the village. By a majority of four to one Fordham has refused it. The result was quite expected. A few wells have been found to be polluted but they only need to be deepened and the top soil kept free of sewage. Between the two streams the soil is boggy and the water polluted by decaying vegetation.

1925 12 29

The Water Engineer submitted a scheme to Ely RDC for the extension of water supply to Haddenham. He recommends the erection of a reinforced concrete water tower with a capacity of 100,000 gallons as the existing towers at Littleport and Sutton. The site chosen is the corner of a field at the back of the Rectory House, abutting the bowling green. There are other convenient sites but this is nearer to the existing pipeline and enables it to be laid straight to the tower without unnecessary curves or awkward bends.

1926 01 23

"I want to remind you that the Labour Party is not a party of Bolshevists, or Communists, or Anarchists, or anything like that. Most of us are simple, honest, straightforward men and women. We have absolute confidence that our party is the part of the future", said Major Freyer at a well-attended meeting organised by New Town Ward Labour Party. He added: "I can assure you that the Liberals and Conservatives on Cambridge Town Council are practically the same." He believed the essential services such as water, gas and electric power, and transport should be community-owned.

1926 02 18

Much of the water supply for Fordham is derived from shallow wells in close proximity to groups of cottages, pit privies and refuse heaps. Almost all the 104 wells are liable to gross pollution and unfit for drinking purposes. In addition a few houses are dependent upon unfiltered water from the river. The Medical Officer of Health regards this as a grave potential danger and is of the opinion that the only way of dealing with the matter is to provide an ample and pure supply for the whole village

1926 08 12

A woman was fined 5s for breaking bylaws under the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885. She owned land at Clavering occupied by caravan dwellers. There was no supply of drinking water and the sanitary arrangements consisted of four posts driven into the ground and covered with sacking. There was a stream of running water which was fit for washing and making tea, but unfit for drinking; if necessary drinking water could be obtained from the village pump, half-a-mile away.

1927 01 27

Swavesey RDC have built eight houses under the assisted scheme and sites had now been selected for six houses at Swavesey and four at Conington which was plenty for that village. Over did not require any and Boxworth and Lolworth had 16 thoroughly good cottages and there was no need for fresh houses. They had the Bourn water supply put on. The cost to supply water to Hatley St George would be about £40; were they justified in laying such a large burden on a small village with only about a dozen cottages.

1927 07 28

Ely housing committee found a case where 17 people were using one W.C. and that sort of thing could be dealt with. More difficult were houses that were absolutely dangerous and unfit for the habitation of pigs. It would be a good thing if they made an example of a couple of cases and pulled down the houses to show that the Council had the matter in hand. Water supplies and the cheap manufacture of soap had done a great deal to encourage people in the ways of cleanliness and they now wanted better housing conditions for people to live in.

1927 09 15

The question of water supply was becoming more and more serious, Linton RDC was told. In one side of the district there was no water. The ponds were all very low, and the people were drinking out of roadside drains water which was impregnated with decayed vegetable matter. There was no even water enough for cleanliness, and something must be done. But the other side was plentifully supplied. Sawston people would object to paying for Horseheath or Castle Camps. The question was whether they should go on digging wells or whether it was possible to take any other measure which would be more perfect or less expensive

1928 01 05

Hardwick is the poorest parish in the district. The road in the centre of the village was not fit to be called a road at all. It was one of the most dangerous, treacherous, roads in England & was getting narrower. Application for purer water had been made in March 1899 but it was still unsatisfactory. They had applied for eight houses in 1919 but none were built. There were people in the village at present times whose children were living in other houses.

1928 06 11

The District council was told that the Hon Gerald Agar-Robartes had agreed to let the council have a site for some new cottages at Arrington. But he had now written a letter: "I have been thinking over the site for the cottages and am afraid they would not look well unless they were thatched. If the Council are not willing to thatch them they would have to build further down the road." However the other site was very unsuitable because there was no water and there was a very obnoxious ditch running near it.

1929 03 30

Coun Rowley spoke of the serious pollution of Histon Brook. There was a stream of black sewage matter six inches deep. From this pollution he had lost two horses and another which was about to die and he had been put to very heavy expenditure for water. If water was taken from a pump at Cottenham fed by the brook it ate through the tubes in one hour. They should apply for an injunction against Messrs Chivers resulting in the stopping of the factory. But there were a large number of cottages, a large laundry and a butcher all discharging water into the brook crude, and not filtered as at Chivers. The pollution came from up the brook at Girton as well as lower down

1930 07 22

At Harston the flow of water from springs had greatly decreased; fountains were only trickling and one had ceased to run. At Barrington one of the chief fountains had run dry and other villages were beginning to suffer. A deep bore had been sunk at the cement works; after extensive pumping at the works the village water supply dropped off and when the works shut down for a week the water improved. 30 07 22a-b

1930 07 28

County councillors should contribute towards water supply in the Linton district because since the new Cambridge water scheme at Fulbourn came about a lot of the village wells had run dry. Coun. Frost said: "I would not mind paying for a motor charabanc to take them out to West Wrattling and let them have a cup of tea out of the pond – but I very much doubt that I should bring them back alive". But this would be the thin end of the wedge and umpteen other applications would come in from other villages. 30 07 28a-c

1930 12 16

Cambridge council's plans for extending their boundaries were described as 'arrogant' by Chesterton RDC. They would upset local administration and leave only a small county that could not be staffed adequately. Villages did not want to lose their parish councils that knew their needs in exchange for a representative on the Borough Council. They had no control over water, gas or electric supply and are at the mercy of monopoly companies – these are the benefit they propose to extend to the surrounding authorities. 30 12 16a&b&c

1931 03 27

The well at Balsham is in a dangerous condition; the chalk blocks at the top will have to be removed to a depth of five feet and the well lined with brickwork, with more repairs 51 feet down. Before this can be carried out the whole of the chalk lining needs to be secured by bolts from the surface. The council discussed final details of the village water scheme but rejected a proposal to include fire hydrants in case of fire. 31 03 27k

1931 04 10

Since 1904 the charges for the water and the poor rates have each risen by over 300 per cent. But whereas the services of lighting, better paths, roads and sewerage have increased enormously the supply of water has been just the same. The Water Company has simply passed any extra charges on to the consumer. Now they are unwilling to agree to a take-over by Cambridge Town Council. But no parliament will refuse any town the right to its own water supply. The anti-Socialist composition of our legislators leaves no doubt that the stockholders will be generously treated. 31 04 10l-n

1931 04 10

Waterworks purchase proposal – history of water company – 31 04 10d-n

1931 05 15

Kirtling wants a supply of pure water: the school well is contaminated and the only public well is at the top of the village. Some residents have to walk a mile and a half for water. All the other wells are shallow and subject to surface contamination with some people dependent on land drains. But the cost of any improved water supply should not be more than the village can afford. Water from the borehole at en is not satisfactory but not so bad that it cannot be used in case of necessity. 31 05 15a

1931 06 19

One of Cottenham's old houses overlooking the Green was entirely destroyed by fire. It was occupied by Mr & Mrs Thoday, who carried on a small general shop as part of their home, and was built of wood and plaster walls with a thatched roof covered with galvanised iron. Local firemen managed to fix up a hose on the water main but the pressure was feeble so water was pumped from Horace Gautrey's pond. They had to pull off the roof and demolish the walls to get at the seat of the fire. Ropes were attached to the roof corners and it was pulled off with a crash but the house was finally reduced to a smouldering wreck. 31 06 19a

1931 08 21

Chesterton RDC approved a proposal to purchase the New Cottenham Gas and Waterworks Company for £4,500. As the original valuation had been fixed at £5,000 they had reached a fairly good bargain. Now the gas works will be conveyed to the University and Town Gas Light Company for £500. 31 08 21b

1931 09 18

The Sanitary Inspector said he went to Boxworth to investigate an anonymous letter about the water supply. He visited several houses and the people were complaining bitterly. The local policeman fetched a bucket of water, and it was positively appalling. "You can't stand the smell of it, let alone drink it", he said. It was hardly necessary to send it away for analysis. There was a pond on the green and the water was supposed to be filtered to the well. 31 09 18

1931 11 20

The garage, containing two cars belonging to Mr P.H. Grundy of Royston was destroyed by fire. The wind blew the flames on to the chauffeur's cottage but all his furniture was removed to safety. Duxford RAF fire brigade offered their services and had the wind not changed their 50-gallon tanks of chemicals would have been vitally necessary, owing to the lack of water. 31 11 20a

1931 12 18

A crowded meeting at Cambridge Guildhall threw out proposals for the Corporation to take over the Waterworks Company. Were they going to get a cheaper or more efficient service? No. There had been no serious criticisms of the management and there would be heavy legal expenses and compensation to directors. But the creator had given mankind three essential things: sunshine, air and water and it was immoral for water to be kept from the people by private enterprise. 31 12 18 e f g

1932 08 26

Ely council considered a letter about the proposed open-air swimming baths to be erected by a Cambridge lady. She wanted to know the price they required for the land, whether they would lay on a water supply and how much they would charge for filling it with water. It would hold 70,000 gallons and be changed once a week. Ely people wanted a swimming bath but if it was going to pay an individual, would it not pay the council? They should look into costs themselves. 32 08 26c

1932 12 23

Cottenham and waterworks – Chesterton RDC to purchase – 32 12 23d

1933 01 27

Water Company's scheme – new main for Cambridge – 33 01 27e & f

1933 02 10

St Ives Chicory Factory wished to increase its supply of water to 50,000 gallons a day for the whole season. If the supply was cut off for two or three days it would not be an inconvenience. They would erect a pumping station and put down a filter plant on their property. East Hunts Water Company will be asked how much they are able to supply without detriment to the Borough. 33 02 10a

1933 02 20

Waterworks company list of plumbers – 33 02 20b

1933 04 10

Ramsey water scheme – 33 04 10a

1933 04 10

Huntingdon water scheme - 33 04 10c

1933 06 08

St Ives water scheme – 33 06 08a

1933 08 16

Water from four wells at the Pit, Isleham is unfit for drinking and they must be closed. They were probably contaminated from the top and ought to be inspected to see where it came from. Now another nineteen wells will be analysed. Councillors also discussed the bad state of Padney Road Wicken: something ought to be done before the heavy traffic of beet haulage began. 33 08 16

1933 09 19

Mr A.J. Wardley of Whittlesford was filling up a County Council water cart with the vehicle standing on the village bridge when a car skidded on the damp surface. It knocked the horse and cart into the river, which is ten feet deep. The driver was thrown high and dry. Seventeen people helped extract the horse, which was cut in several places, and the tank was damaged, with the two shafts broken. 33 09 19

1933 10 06

Ramsey's water is unfit for drinking unless it is boiled and filtered. In 1909 a report on the sanitary conditions revealed that the most urgent need was a safe public water supply. The same sources of water, which were then criticised very severely, are in use today. Between 1920 and 1930 various schemes had been suggested but the cost was always prohibitive. Ramsey is purely an agricultural district with no factories or industries and a water scheme was the only hope for development, either industrially or residentially. 33 10 06

1933 11 02

The water supply from the open reservoir at the Elsworth end of Boxworth is very unsatisfactory. During the recent summer months it has been very offensive and as a surface well near the school

dried up during the drought villagers have had to go half a mile or more for water, the Medical Officer told County Councillors. 33 11 02

1933 12 21

Bourn and neighbouring villages have been fortunate during the past abnormally dry summer in having a good water supply. A further stage towards making that supply safer was marked when the East Hunts Water Company opened their new reservoir. Built of reinforced concrete it is three times as large as the old tank which has been a familiar landmark on the Cambridge to St Neots Road for the last 40 years. 33 12 21

1934 01 04

Drought – water carted to Horseheath – 34 01 04

1934 02 26

Over water supply results of boring operations – 34 02 26

1934 02 28

Newmarket district water supply – 34 02 28

1934 03 14

The recent rains have had no effect on the serious shortage of water in certain villages in the Horseheath district. A ton and a half of water is carted daily from Haverhill and is rationed to the villagers at two bucketful per household. This has been going on, with the exception of a short break, since last September and is expected to continue till “the company’s water” is laid to the houses concerned. The expense of a pound a day will fall on County ratepayers. 34 03 14

1934 03 22

The final meeting of Linton Rural District Council was held before it combined with Melbourn and Caxton and Arrington to form the new South Cambridgeshire RDC. It could not be termed a ‘funeral party’ for the council has never been a soulless machine and died as it had lived in a friendly and pleasant atmosphere. White-haired Canon Thornton has presided over it from 1909, the last of the three chairmen. He remembered when some councillors rode to meetings on horseback and put their horses in the place later used for the hearse. Their last debate was on the biggest scheme ever launched: the plan for supplying water to the whole district. 34 03 22

1934 05 17

The beautiful Church Farm estate at Eversden comprises 300 acres of open country surrounded by hills, one mile from Lords Bridge railway station. The new houses are beautifully designed by a qualified architect. Each have three bedrooms, a bathroom with chromium fittings, a spacious kitchen and electricity and company’s water supplied from new Artesian wells on the estate. The price is only £550 - £50 down and thirteen shillings and sixpence (66p) weekly. 34 05 17

1934 06 23

Sir – we are now desired by the Government to economise in our use of water but I actually saw a huge Corporation cart filled with water which men were lavishly pouring on to the roots of young trees which have been planted in Hurst Park. I consider this to be utterly unnecessary. If water can be spared why not distribute it to poor animals and spare the anxiety of their owners who are obliged to go five miles to fetch water – ‘Disgusted’. 34 06 23

1934 09 06

At Castle Camps the population of 505 people depended on a deep well pump and it was very difficult to get water. It took about 170 turns to obtain two gallons from the pump and it was the only drinking water available. The situation has become worse recently because a lot of the shallow wells had dried up. The Parish Council suggested the District Council arrange a water cart three times a week. But they would charge a penny a bucket. 34 09 06

1934 09 12

A quantity of earth has fallen from the sides of the Kirtling parish well and filled it up to above water level. Messrs Lack of Cottenham say cleaning it out and making good the brickwork was very dangerous and they were not prepared to undertake the work. They suggested a new borehole be sunk. A 200 gallon water cart has been hired from Pamplin Bros to distribute water from the main at Wood Ditton at a cost of one penny a pail full. 34 09 12

1934 09 15

Work is in progress on the concrete approach road to Cambridge Water Company's new Softening Station on the Fulbourn Road. When it is finished consumers will get water having less than half the hardness of the present supply. 'Fur' and 'scale' in kettles will be greatly reduced and it will lather more easily with the almost complete absence of the unsightly curd which now forms. 34 09 15

1934 11 24

"This is the first time in history that a water company has of its own free will undertaken the softening of its supply", the Chairman of the Cambridge Waterworks Company said at the laying the foundation stone of its new water-softening station on Fulbourn Road. Cambridge water is abundant and pure but being drawn from a chalk formation is of necessity hard in quality. A considerable number of private water-softening plants have been installed but these will soon not be worth their salt and people should ignore the blandishment of salesmen. 34 11 24b

1934 12 06

The Sanitary Inspector had examined a number of private wells in Swaffham Prior and found the amount of water in some of them was very small and repairs were needed in a variety of cases. It was recommended that in the event of the council not deciding to provide the village with a piped supply of water that two wells be sunk, one near the Cock Inn and one near Station Road. 34 12 06

1935 01 02

Water scheme, Haddenham – 35 01 02

1935 02 21

Contractors had started pumping at the East Hatley borehole. The yield was 200 gallons of water an hour with the engine, which meant about five gallons a minute by hand. The Sanitary Inspector had tried the pump himself and found it took about five minutes to get the water up. Once that was done there was a good supply. The contractors had changed the fittings slightly but given a satisfactory explanation, he told councillors. However members insisted the original specifications must be adhered to, even if it meant putting up a new pump. 35 02 21a

1935 05 03

The water situation at the Elsworth end of Boxworth is very unsatisfactory. Water from the pond by the roadside is practically unusable, some of the inhabitants had to go half a mile for water and a proper public supply is urgent. At Longstowe part of the parish had to depend on water from roofs. This proved inadequate and of unsatisfactory quality. The distance from some of the houses to be nearest standpipe was considerable. It should be a simple matter to carry the pipe line along the village street to the railway bridge with a standpipe provided near the houses on the Old North Road also Kirtling & Over 35 05 03c

1935 06 07

It will cost less to wash in Cambridge from now on, thanks to the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company's new water-softening station at Cherry Hinton whose plant was designed by Messrs Roby of London. They were a public utility company which while it had a duty to their shareholders, also had a duty to the public. So when in 1934 the Company had at long last freed itself from the heavy financial drain incurred by the obsolescence of the old Fulbourn pumping station,

much consideration was given to the problem of how subsequent revenue surplus could be handed back to its customers. 35 06 07 &

1935 06 07

Godmanchester medical officer said only a small percentage of the houses had water closets and baths. He had tested 30 wells and found that in 21 the water was unfit for drinking because in dry weather the water from the drains ran into them. He strongly advised the council to put in a pure water supply. But they did not want to put great burdens on the ratepayers. During the financial crisis of 1931 the council thought it was not time to embark on big expenses, in 1932 nothing was done and in 1933 they'd asked Huntingdon if it was possible to draw from their water supply. 35 06 07 b & c

1935 08 08

There were ten back-to-back houses in London Road and The Warren, Royston. The living room was practically underground, there was no through ventilation, sanitary accommodation and water supply were inadequate and they were in a bad state of disrepair. A large amount would have to be spent to make them fit for human habitation and they should be demolished. But there were no vacant houses to which the tenants could go and they were quite content where they were, an Inquiry was told. 35 08 08

1935 08 20

Fire near East Hunts Waterworks Company premises Bourn – 35 08 20a

1935 10 04

The housing position at Longstowe is scandalous. No working men's cottages have been built for over 70 years. Two old thatched cottages had been condemned but there was nowhere else for the occupants to live. Half of the residents have to go half-a-mile for drinking water and mothers are unable to wash their children's clothes. But Hunts Water Company said it suffered no special hardship when compared to other places. During the drought residents only had to fetch water a matter of 500 yards and improvements would need a new mains 35 10 04 & a

1935 10 23

The Minister of Heath criticised Godmanchester Town Council for delaying a water supply scheme that had been agreed with Huntingdon town council. The Town Clerk and the Medical Officer resigned as did two councillors. Tenders had already been submitted and it was the most unbusinesslike thing the Council had ever done. But the Mayor said the lowest tender was far above the engineer's estimate and the Ministry had not sanctioned a loan to carry out the work. 35 10 23a

1935 11 02

Isleham woman drowned in water butt – 35 11 02

1935 11 07

Dr Gasteen of Gamlingay complained that a number of villagers were suffering from diarrhoea and sickness which he attributed to the quality of the water and in one case death had been accelerated by drinking it. Instructions had been given to boil water before use. Few of the wells were safe and the contamination was due to lack of sewerage facilities. He felt that a policy of evasion or obstruction was being pursued by the RDC. But councillors said it was a pity he did not come to the council and help carry out some of their things he suggested and no further action was taken 35 11 07

1935 11 22

As a Cambridge Corporation steam roller made its majestic way along Adam and Eve Row the road gently subsided. So did the steam roller as one wheel became buried nearly up to the axle, fracturing the water main. Mr A.C. Mallyon, the driver, said "I felt the roller sink a little so opened the regulator to try and get it past the spot before it sank, but before you could say 'one' it was in. If I hadn't had hold of the regulator handle I reckon I should have fallen overboard". It was several hours before the roller was eventually 'rescued' by means of jacks and the main repaired. 35 11 22b pics 35 11 22c

1936 01 16

Unruly and heated scenes were witnessed at a parish meeting at Burwell to discuss proposals for piped water. Analysts reported that 27 wells were unsafe for drinking from but one man aged 92 said he had been using one of these all his life. There had been cases of diphtheria but they were imported from outside. Many men did not realise the large volume of water that had to be drawn for washing. Were they going to deny a little comfort and ease to their wives for the sake of the cost of a packet of cigarettes a week? But a water scheme would be an infliction and they could not afford it. 36 01 16 & a

1936 05 15

Huntingdon councillors discussed demolition orders on various properties. Slade Cottage in St Peter's Hill needed repair and had no water supply. But the owner said this was not necessary as the occupiers got their water from a near-by spring. Two shops in St Germain Street would become unsafe if the adjacent house was demolished while new drains had been put in and water laid on to Rectory Cottages. But no.3 Newton's Court and 4 Hartford Corner should be demolished within in six months. 36 05 15

1936 09 17

Saffron Walden council discuss water and sewage problems – 36 09 17

1936 09 19

St Ives RDC has lodged a strong objection against the installation of overhead electricity cables in the village of Holywell. They would be a tremendous eyesore in one of the prettiest villages which had several thatched cottages that, though modernised, contribute to its antiquity. But people at Hemingford Grey did not want water laid on by the council and could not be forced to have it. However residents of Hemingford Abbots did want a supply 36 09 19b

1936 09 30

Chesterton RDC discussed the Harston water scheme where there had been a breakdown following a collapse of clay into the bore. It was now cleared up. But Coun.Ilsley complained of the quality of the water: it came through discoloured, a grey colour. It was impossible to see through it and had a scum on the top. However the question of charges were 'much more cloudy' than the water. It had been intended to charge people within 200 feet of the standpipes but there had to be a satisfactory supply before this could be done. 36 09 30 & a

1936 10 09

South Cambs RDC's water scheme was inaugurated with the opening of the new pumping station between Linton and Hildersham. Previously water had to be carted to two parishes and it is hoped that every household within reasonable distance of the mains would take a supply. Councillors then visited the water tower on Rivey Hill where most climbed to the top and inspected the 87,000 gallon tank. 36 10 09 b & c

1936 10 10

The extension to the Beck Row pumping station sees the completion of the Ely rural district water scheme. There was no good water in the area at all so they'd had to go to Suffolk to find it. The first stage had been completed after the war using money from the unemployment grants. Now they had put in a new set of mains, making a complete circuit, and had duplicated the machinery to pump twice the quantity for 24 hours a day. It had been immensely expensive but 95 per cent of the population had the opportunity of a supply 36 10 10

1936 10 20

King's College had employed a firm to supply a pump to serve half-a-dozen jets of water at their fountain. They had intended to use the water over and over again but found that with the heavy wind the water was blown over the gravel and did not go back into the fountain. So they had connected the

mains to make up the loss. This contravened Water Company byelaws and there was a danger of contaminating the supply 36 10 20a

1936 11 05

The Air Ministry propose to construct a RAF station at Bassingbourn and approached South Cambs RDC about the possibility of obtaining a supply of 15,000 gallons of water a day. This could be obtained from Croydon Hill at a cost of 10d per 1,000 gallons. The scheme would take 20 months to implement and would also serve nearby parishes. But did any of the parishes want piped water? It would mean a rate of over four shillings for Litlington, Shingay and Wendy and there had been too much money spent on water already, all of which was money wasted. 36 11 05c & d

1936 12 30

Cambridge Place was a long, narrow cul-de-sac with a narrow entrance from Hills Road. It used to have an unenviable reputation but had now greatly improved. It was a convenient place for residents engaged in unskilled work who left their houses early and returned late. But the houses were unfit for human habitation. Nearly all the roofs were sunken, the doors perished, the plaster was decayed, the stairs dark and steep. They were all were damp, thirty-three shared a water tap with another house and none had a water closet inside nor any proper place to keep food, an Inquiry heard. 36 12 30b & c, picture 36 12 31

1937 01 08

Tribute was paid to a water-diviner at the opening of Over's new water works. After one bore had been sunk unsuccessfully the Chairman of the Parish Council contacted Mr Charles Adams and when he was walking with his 'magic twigs' they twisted violently. The well was sunk in that position. They had originally wanted a supply from the East Hunts Water Company but this meant paying Swavesey for the use of their main and they had charged too much. The new station had two pumps which stopped and started automatically when the level in the water tower dropped. 37 01 08 & a

1937 03 27

Waterworks Company new workshop and depot foundation stone, Rustat Road – 37 03 27c

1937 04 23

Wicken wells – 37 04 23b

1937 05 20

Chesterton RDC told an inspector that the parishes of Histon, Impington and Girton together with Shelford and Stapleford were provided with a piped water supply but were entirely unsewered, although some properties were connected to surface water drains that discharged into watercourses passing through the inhabited parts of the parishes. The development of building estates had given rise to cess-pool areas of considerable magnitude with the danger of pollution of the sub-soil. The pumping plants would be electrically driven and would not spoil the appearance of the countryside, there would be no smell unless one broke down. But nearby house owners claimed they might have an effect on the value of properties 37 05 20 & a

1937 06 16

Isleham has no public water supply and the inhabitants are dependent on private sources. These consist of shallow wells in the chalk varying in depth from 10 to 45 feet. There were about 160 of them situated close to houses. Samples taken for analysis from wells in the old chalk pit containing 40 houses, show most were unsafe for drinking purposes. Others were liable to pollution. The refuse from pail water closets was disposed of upon garden ground or allotments. But the borehole for Ely Waterworks was near the railway bridge and the water main supplying the Ely rural district passed through the village. 37 06 16

1937 09 22

Fordham waterworks scheme 37 09 22

1937 09 29

A scheme of 1853 provided Ely with a supply of water from the River Ouse which was stored in an underground reservoir then pumped to the water tower. The old reservoir was abandoned in 1885 and in 1933 was converted into an open-air swimming pool. Then steam-driven wells were sunk at Isleham to take water from the chalk. Now they plan a new underground reservoir tank which, with the present water tower, will ensure four day's supply in the event of emergency. But proposals for another water tower will not be proceeded with on account of its vulnerability to attacks by aircraft, councillors heard. 37 09 29a

1937 10 20

Percy Salmon gave a lantern lecture on Melbourn to Cambridge Photographic Club. One drawback was a lack of water supply and this was a serious matter to a photographer. The method of washing slides at the village pump was slow, but healthy, while dangling them in the mill pond merely provided a free picture show for the stickleback, who ruin the slides by their curiosity and rubbed the gelatine off. He deplored the 'slum clearance fever' which has swept Melbourn. It has made the village more healthy but less picturesque and no longer a hunting ground for photography 37 10 20c

1937 10 23

Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company's new workshops and depots in Rustat Road would lead to improved service, enhanced efficiency and – sooner or later – reduced charges. The old premises in Bene't Street had been a veritable shambles and disgrace with pipes stored at the disused Cherry Hinton and Fulbourn pumping stations. They would wage ceaseless war against waste by leakage and had a gang of plumbers ready to deal with any emergency 24 hours a day with the promptitude of the London Fire Brigade. 37 10 23b

1937 11 05

The cost of providing and maintaining Ely fire brigade and equipment was considerable and there should be payment if they were to attend fires in the rural area, councillors heard. Only Downham, Sutton, Witcham and Haddenham had fire-fighting equipment but no one would work the Haddenham engine. The whole district was now connected to a water supply so parish councils should connect to the mains and erect stand pipes. But the Cambridge brigade had offered their services without any retaining fee and that would be cheaper. 37 11 05b

1938 01 14

Ely water tower on Cambridge Road, was built in 1853 and took water from the River Ouse until 1884-5 when by a deep well was sunk at Isleham. It was designed for a population of only 6,000 – 2,500 fewer than now – and needed to be constantly topped up. In case of war, when supplies of electricity or crude oil might be suspended, the tank would be totally inadequate to meet demand from the sugar factory, brewery and laundry. This would leave no water for fire-fighting purposes. They needed a larger reservoir in a field adjoining the present tower, an Inquiry heard 38 01 14 & a

1938 03 15

Ely water supply – 38 03 15a

1938 03 22

Market Hill fountain water not fit for human consumption – 38 03 22e

1938 04 08

Ely RDC discussed the large amount of water that continues to overflow from the water tower at Haddenham on to residents' gardens. Pipes could be put down to Grunty Fen, but people did not want it there. There was also the question of what the village would do if, in the event of war, the tower was struck by a bomb. But Mr Cross said that aircraft seldom hit their objective. Messrs Harding of Duxford's tender was accepted for the erection of three-bedroomed houses at Witcham but in future they should consider building two-bedroomed homes in view of the cost 38 04 08b & c

1934 04 30

Air Raid Precaution plans contemplate the division of Cambridge into three main areas each of which could be operated separately in the event of communication being destroyed in an air raid on one or more of the river or railway bridges. The total personnel required should be not less than 3,300 with street wardens dealing with about 500 people. The existing staff of the Corporation, Water, Gas and Electricity companies will form a strong nucleus of the personnel required and are being trained in anti-gas measures. There will have to be co-operation between the Borough and County to give mutual assistance in case of need 38 04 30b

1938 05 16

Saffron Walden water supply problems – 38 05 16

1938 05 30

Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Co, new workshops & depot – 38 05 30g

1938 07 14

The Bursar of Downing College complained that water supply to cottages they owned near Valley Farm, Croydon, had been affected by the new Gamlingay and Lt Gransden water scheme. It was a bored well to the greensand and always provided an adequate supply but since the last pumping operations the water had completely failed. Tenants had to fetch water from the standpipe at Toll Bar Bungalow. He asked the RDC to meet half the cost of connecting the cottage to the main 38 07 14a & b

1938 08 11

Water scheme including Bassingbourn aerodrome – 38 08 11 & a

1938 08 19

Rural depopulation is a serious issue as the influx of people to the towns continues. The towns had all the amenities of life – water, electricity and gas – and men and particularly women would not suffer the lack of comforts which others enjoyed. These amenities must be provided in the country. The Government had given a million pounds for water supplies in rural districts, but that grant was exhausted. Sawston waterworks was the fourth in South Cambs and if people came to the district the rateable value would improve enabling them to construct more 38 08 19a

1938 11 23

Ely new water tower work starts; new hospital will need 30,000 gallons of water a day – 38 11 23b

1938 12 02

Western area water scheme – 38 12 02

1938 12 16

The Bishop of Ely spoke in favour of cremation at the opening of the Cambridge Crematorium: it overcame the difficulty of overcrowded cemeteries and the danger of water pollution which might arise from earth burial – 38 12 16a, b Advert 38 12 17c

1938 12 31

Sanitary conditions in Ely in the 1830s were terrible and in 1853 the Board of Health built the existing water tower; now the foundation stone was laid for a new concrete reservoir to cater for increased growth. Nothing sort of an earthquake or a direct hit from an aerial torpedo would deprive consumers. 38 12 31a

1939 01 03

Sir – Teversham people cannot understand why we are not going to be allowed to have electric light brought into our houses. Two years ago an inspector came and condemned our pumps and put up notices saying ‘Not fit to drink’. Still we are waiting for the piped water supply. It seems as though the chief objection to electric light is against poles being stick up in the village. But what about the lovely-looking building on the corner of Teversham Road – a machine gun range. We are going to have all the noise from guns, aeroplanes etc but not a little comfort and cleaner water. – Lightwater 39 01 03

1939 01 27

Shepreth and Meldreth ratepayers objected to the new water extension scheme. Everybody would pay an extra rate, whether they used the water or not. But there were 39 artesian springs in Meldreth that could all be made to run to a small pump. Water supplies in Orwell were inadequate and unsafe, being favourable to an outbreak of typhoid. The Government evacuation scheme made a pure supply a necessity for children coming from London: they would not be used to well water and serious illness might break out. 39 01 27a

1939 02 23

East Hatley water supply – 39 02 23

1939 04 20

Water supplies at Old Wimpole adequate, no householder wanted to take water from mains, but Gt Chishill wanted supply – 39 04 20

1939 04 27

Progress is being made on the construction of the Cambridge Waterworks Company’s new reinforced concrete service reservoir on Lime Kiln Road. With a capacity of two million gallons, it will double the available storage so that in the event of a breakdown at the pumping station the supply could be maintained for practically two days. Over 1,400 tons of concrete and 150 tons of steel will be used. When finished the banks and roof will be soiled and sown with grass seed to provide effective camouflage for something which would doubtless prove attractive to raiding aeroplanes 39 04 27a

1939 05 01

It is unlikely that the Water Company’s source of supply, the Fleam Dyke pumping station, would be chosen as a target by enemy bombers, but even if it were it is less likely that a direct hit capable of putting both duplicate sets of machinery out of action would be registered. However the disused Fulbourn pumping station has been completely reconditioned as a precaution. But if Cambridge was raided it is almost inevitable that water mains would sustain considerable damage the Manager said. The Company supplied water to 81,000 people but this may well be increased to over 110,000 by evacuations from London, 39 05 01 & a

1939 07 22

Waterworks new service reservoir is most up-to-date in country; Fulbourn pumping station brought back into use as ARP standby; history – 39 07 22

1939 07 25

Waterworks Company new bowling green opened, the only one with an air raid shelter – 39 07 25

1939 07 26

Strangers drinking the water in Houghton and Wyton would be risking typhoid or other disease, due to the putrid wells, but the natives were immune, an inquiry heard. The school well was condemned and cottages with pail closets had to bury the contents in an inclosure that seeped into the wells. The supply was from very shallow wells and liable to contamination. The wells were of dried brick, most of the tops being below the surface of the ground. Some were on cultivated plots that were manured.

Two in Hemingford Abbots were so grossly polluted they were not analysed, the Sanitary Inspector reported 39 07 26a

1939 07 27

Brampton water polluted 39 07 27

1939 11 22

During a very dry summer wells in Kennett run dry and people have to get water from their more fortunate neighbours. In the event of a fire a hose attached to an ordinary household pump would run the well dry in a very few minutes. At Kennett End there is a builder's yard containing a large amount of timber with houses and a petrol pump close by. If fire broke out it would be difficult to deal with, villages said. But the water scheme was extravagant and there was a war on. 39 11 22c

1939 12 16

The new concrete reservoir on Lime Kiln Hill has been built partly below ground and covered with earth which will be sewed with grass seed, adding a pleasant green mound to the skyline. To guard against an interruption in supply due to a breakdown of pumping machinery or the bursting of trunk mains, the Water Company now had duplicate plan together with a reserve of four million gallons – nearly two days' supply – in its three reservoirs. 39 12 16

1939 12 20

Ely Council Surveyor reported that a number of cracks and bulges had appeared on the south-east side of the old water reservoir. There was no doubt the damage had been caused by lightning. The settlement of the new tank had nothing to do with it. The tank was drained of 990 tons of water and when it was filled another pier started to crack, so it was immediately drained again. Twelve months ago there was nothing wrong with the tower which was built 84 years ago. They should claim on their insurance 39 12 20b

1940 02 28

Newmarket RDC water scheme delay, Isleham Fen Bank – 40 02 28a

1941 07 10

Meldreth public water supply is unfit to drink – 41 07 10

1941 08 07

Melbourn water safe for drinking – 41 08 07

1942 02 20

A Thirsty Town. A sound financial position was revealed at the ordinary general meeting of the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company, which was held on Friday at the company's offices at Bene't Street. Reference was also made to the increased consumption of water and to the fact that the pumping plant used coal, which was required for war production, so that economy in the use of water was still necessary.

1943 10 20

East Huntingdonshire Water Company wound up – set up 1887 to establish water works in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, recently taken over by a joint water board formed by the Ministry of Health – 43 10 20

1944 02 18

Former well digger. By the passing of Mr. F. Webb at the age of 91, the village (Guilden Morden) has lost its oldest inhabitant. In earlier years he achieved fame as a well digger and borer for water, and gained an extensive knowledge of local water supplies over a wide area. He had four sons, three of whom are still living, one being, in Australia, and two daughters.

1945 07 13

Waterworks booster station, Castle Hill opened to boost supplies to north Cambridge – 45 07 13

1945 07 06

Water Board. At the annual meeting of the Chesterton and St. Ives Joint Water Board held at the Town Hall, St. Ives, on Thursday week, Mr. H. G. Waddelow (Chesterton R.D.C.) was elected chairman of the Board for the ensuing year, and Mr. J. H. Leycester (St. Ives R.D.C.) vice-chairman. In addition to the usual quarterly business, consideration was given to the question of instructing the engineer to prepare a report on the potentialities of the Board's water resources, and also the necessity for obtaining estimates from the constituent authorities of their supply requirements over a period of years. 45 07 06

1947 01 01 c

Housewives are dealt yet another blow today. Cambridge University & Town Waterworks Company will reluctantly be compelled to close down the water softening plant at Cherry Hinton. Cambridge's water will then be about twice its present hardness. There have been drastic reductions in the coal required to evaporate the brine at the salt works in Cheshire. Mr Philip Porteous, managing director of the company told a reporter "The Government takes the view that water softening is one of those amenities without which we can manage in times of crisis, but we appreciate only too well the difficulties of the housewife in these days of soap rationing"

1947 04 18

A conference to discuss water problems and their solutions heard recommendations as to the water supply to the parishes of Longstowe, Babraham, Duxford etc. Merits of a scheme for a supply of water to those parishes without a piped supply were discussed. The main point at issue was whether the existing source at Croydon should be maintained and developed. One hundred and twenty thousand gallons of water per day were wasted during the recent severe weather. Owing to the snow and floods it was difficult to account for the losses. Eventually however they were found to be due to burst pipes at Basingbourn airfield

1947 06 04

The need for water economy in Cambridge is still urgent, if restrictions are not to be placed on supplies for the first time in the 94 years of the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company's existence. Emphasising this today Mr P. Porteous, managing director said that the position showed a slight improvement. "Consumption dropped from over five million gallons to just above four and a half millions gallons yesterday". "We find ourselves able to get just a little back into the reservoirs. Rain and a drop in temperature will help us". Sun temperatures was 84 degrees, compared with yesterday's maximum of 104 degrees, the highest yet recorded in the present heat wave

1947 07 31

At the meeting of the Chesterton Rural District Council it was reported that a further three parishes (Coton, Fen Drayton and Lolworth) had been supplied with water mains. It was anticipated that the work involving the supply to Barton, Comberton, Toft, Haslingfield and Harlton would be put in hand during the coming year. Several parishes, notably Croxton, Eltisley, Graveley, Hardwick and Dry Drayton were extremely short of water for domestic and stock purposes and trouble was anticipated in the summer months. The position could not be improved until a new high level water tower was erected thereby affording sufficient pressure to enable a mains supply to be taken to these villages.

1947 09 04

Secrecy surrounding boring operations now in progress at Coton has given rise to extraordinary rumours in the village. "They are prospecting for uranium deposits" was the general brief amongst several villagers. The operations began last week when two men from London started boring a 20ft hole on the Whitwell bridle path, which is War Department property and used by the Territorial Association as a rifle range. The truth is that the borings are being made on behalf of the Metropolitan

Water Board to discover the type of ground through which mains would have to pass if the Board proceeded with a scheme to take a supply from the River Ouse.

1948 01 14

Mr P. Porteous of the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company gave details of the sources from which his company obtained their supplies and said each one was approaching the limit of capacity of their present sources and were having to look further afield. Cambridgeshire County Council were required to bear a substantial proportion of the cost of these new works. He was concerned in regard to a scheme to deepen certain dykes in the neighbourhood of Isleham where there would be a great risk of depleting the underground water in the source there. If the dyke in the fen were cut down low and into the edge of the chalk they would bleed out all the water in the upper reservoir and, as a result, there would be a very difficult position at Isleham during the summer months

1948 03 15

Cambridgeshire Cottage Improvement Society have urged the Ministry of Health to give grants towards reconditioning buildings of outstanding beauty and historical interest. The Old Manor House at Fen Drayton was a building of this kind and reconditioning would enable three cottages to be made from two, one of the present cottages being much larger than was required. Water mains have recently been laid in the village and the property has been connected to the supply so that when reconditioning is possible modern conveniences will be practicable. A piped water supply will also shortly be available in Kingston, where the Society has two cottages, and later in Toft, though the main may be some distance from its property

1948 07 28

Public representatives, including members of the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company attended the annual inspection of the water works. The first place of call was the Fleam Dyke Pumping Station where they saw the massive machinery which is responsible for extracting water from a well in the ground. This is the main source of supply for 110,000 people. The daily consumption is 3½ million gallons and if it were necessary to bring water into Cambridge by hauling it it would take 23,000 150-gallon horse drawn water tanks stretching in an unending procession of 130 miles to bring it into Cambridge each day. Since 1920, when the pumps were first taken into use they had pumped 31,000 million gallons which is enough to flood the whole of the Borough of Cambridge to a depth of 12 ft

1948 10 04

The 1,200 villagers of Caldecote, Dry Drayton and Hardwick are "living on the edge of a volcano" and at any time a grave outbreak of disease might overtake them. So said Dr A. Morgan, M.O.H. to Chesterton rural district council at a public inquiry into plans to borrow £27,125 to defray the cost of works of a water supply for these parishes. At present the council have to cart something like 6,000 gallons of water a week to these parishes to supplement the meagre well supplies. At Caldecote, as a temporary measure, stand-pipe supplies have been provided at some points. The rest of the village was dependent upon stored rainwater and supplies carted by the Council

1948 11 01

Cambridgeshire County council planning committee have refused two applications to erect railway carriages as dwellings on the grounds that they "fell below the standard required in any properly planned community". Counc. Mrs Nichols protested against the general trend of planning "teaching us that we cannot do without proper water supplies in place of a good old well as in the days gone by, and that we cannot do without electric light in place of oil lamps. I do hope they will give a few people the liberty to live in the country without these wretched amenities which spoil the view and everything else"

1948 12 31

After a final interview with the Ministry of Health Royston Urban District Council have now almost completed the details of taking over the huts occupied in the Heath P.O.W. camp. Details fixed were that a supply of electricity should be made available, that water supply be given to each hut and sinks fitted where necessary. Fixed baths be not fitted, but each hut be provided with a galvanised portable bath, and also an electric wash boiler with a draw-off to the bath

1949 02 04

An inquiry into a proposed sewerage disposal scheme for Linton was told that piped water was afforded in 1935 with a condition that a scheme for sewage would be proceeded with within five years, but the war stopped it. Sanitary conditions were little different from those existing in 1874 notwithstanding the fact that a number of council houses had been built, there was a village college, and a hospital with 168 beds. No collection of night soil is made by the sanitary authority; the onus of disposal rests upon the householders and constitutes a very real hardship.

1949 02 18

South Cambs. R.D.C. have given an assurance it is their policy to take water into every council house in their district. Lists of tenants who suffered extreme hardship by reason of having to obtain water from standpipes were submitted from Bassingbourn, Guilden Morden and Melbourn. In 1938 they had sent out a circular letter to every house asking if they would pay 2d a week for water, but nearly every village voted against it

1949 09 10

Sir - What I would like to see in post-war Cambridge is the removal of the car park on the Market Square and in its place a small restful garden, with the fountain cleaned and kept running with clear water as its centre-piece. A few seats conveniently placed would add to its charm, for here grandpa could peacefully smoke his pipe whilst grandma did the shopping, and maybe a mother could keep one eye on her children left watching the fountain and feeding the pigeons, as she did the rounds of the market stalls – “Garden lover”

1949 12 12

About 16 years ago a house was built on the main Newmarket-Norwich road. It was to accommodate the Chippenham constable and was put there because the Home Office said they wanted police houses to be on the main road. The house was two miles from any village, had no water laid on (but had a pump from its own well), had no electricity and a sewerage system that was “a little bit ancient”. The constable who had been there a number of years had resigned and the Chief Constable knew that whoever he ordered into the house would at once give notice to terminate his employment. Now the house is to be sold.

1949 12 22

Does anyone know the whereabouts of a bore-hole at Heydon. Mr G.O. Vinter said that in the 1890s the Metropolitan Water Board wanted to know if they could get water in Cambridgeshire for London. A very large bore was put down in a field. South Cambs R.D.C. engineers made enquiries as to whether the Metropolitan Board knew anything about it, but they did not. He added: “My plan is to take a friend who is rather good at water-divining and find out that way”. Meanwhile council officials will make enquiries of an old gentleman who is believed to have worked on the land in that district for the past 60 years.

1950 01 04

Willingham Water Company will be asked if it will sell its undertaking to Chesterton Rural District Council. As the company was not a statutory water undertaking it could not be compelled to take its mains on to the Willingham housing site at Over Road – although they were prepared to take it to the site’s office. The Company said that at the moment they are definitely not prepared to sell.

1950 01 23

An attempt to find Heydon's "lost" borehole by means of a mine detector proved unsuccessful. The bore hole, sunk in the 1890s by South Essex Water Board and afterwards abandoned, is now sought by South Cambs. R.D.C. as being of possible use in a new water scheme. It is believed the bore was sealed with a metal plate which would cause a reaction in a mine detector if not too deeply buried. Some nails, part of an old mole trap and a broken ploughshare were all that was found.

1950 03 03 c

Since fire service tenders have been maintaining a supply of water to five Cambridgeshire villages after a break-down at one of Newmarket RDC's pumping stations. It was found that only 4,500 gallons were available at the station which has a normal output of 30,000 gallons per day. The fire service instituted a shuttle service between the pumping station and a hydrant in Newmarket. The villages affected are Ashley, Cheveley, Wood Ditton, Kirtling and Saxon Street. The council has just received approval for at £82,000 water scheme which they have been pressing for some time

1950 06 09

Tadlow parish council have asked South Cambs. R.D.C. to lay water to the village by pipe line as the present supply of water is totally inadequate. It is need for farmers, for dairy farming, also for domestic purposes, several members complaining that after finishing work in the evening they had from half a mile to walk to fetch water to wash. At present should a fire break out, there is no water until a brigade arrives.

1950 08 16

The urban district of Ely has been without water supply due to a serious break in the pumping main at Soham. A limited supply was made available to the RAF Hospital but the vast majority are having to rely on soft water caught in rain tanks. The manager of the Jam factory said: "I have 20 tons of plums going rotten. I have had to send for a fire tender to get water into the boilers. We can't do a thing because we live on steam"

1950 11 02

The question of whether to connect the hot water system or the water closets in the new council houses at Harlton was debated by Chesterton RDC. The Housing Committee recommended that a tap over the sink be provided and the WCs only connected because it is not yet certain whether the drainage is good enough to take the effluent from both. Coun F. Adams asked: "What is the use of building these bathrooms in these houses if we are not going to use them? It seems ludicrous". Another observed it was much better to have a flush lavatory than an unlimited supply of water to the bath.

1952 05 27

Unless residents and firms in the Newmarket rural area apply economies in their use of water in the near future, there is likely to be a "desperate" shortage. The position is extremely acute owing to the continued lack of water. Every pumping station is working at full pressure but the output is still insufficient. A new regional water scheme which will supply main water from a new well at Chippenham is likely to be in operation at the end of the summer and a brand new reservoir has been built at the top of Newmarket's Warren Hill

1953 01 28

The chairman of Histon parish council protested against a proposal that boundaries of the adjacent parishes should be altered and 415 acres added to Girton. This was the third time that Girton had asked for an extension; on the last occasion in 1934 Histon had agreed. Oakington also wanted additional land, previously the site of the isolation hospital; the Cambridge road was their only source of development since the aerodrome had taken 500 acres, the water supply was provided by the village and residents would be able to avail themselves of the new recreation ground.

1953 06 24

There is no need for Cambridge people to be stingy about water, said the Chairman of Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company. "The company in all its 100 years' history has never had to tell people that they must not water their gardens", he said. But he also stressed the need for consumers to avoid wastage. With an average of four people in each household domestic water cost each person about 1d a week – half the cost of one cigarette.

1953 07 30

South Cambs RDC agreed to borrow £310,360 needed for a comprehensive water scheme designed to supply 17 parishes. At present the east area receives its piped water from Linton and the western area from the village of Croydon. The problem was to find a means of supplying the villages in the centre where eleven of the parishes including Barrington, Duxford, Fowlmere, Foxton, Shepreth and Whittlesford have no piped water at all. A bore was sunk at Dottrell Hall, near Fowlmere, and they were rewarded with a source which will yield a million gallons a day.

1953 10 24

Not one village in Newmarket RDC area is now without a main water supply after the formal opening of Chippenham pumping station. It is the first rural authority in East Anglia to succeed in taking a piped water supply to every parish. Previously three villages had no piped water at all and on occasions water had to be taken to the towers in the high level by the fire brigade, at a cost of £100 a time. They are now able to supply farms and industrial undertakings for the first time. But the scheme was not cheap and the main pumps alone used 11s. 6d. worth of electric power every hour

1954 01 15

Cambridge Waterworks is to supply the Ramsey and St Ives Joint Water Board with a quarter of a million gallons of water a day until 1965. The Board was created in 1937 but its initial plans for abstracting water from the River Ouse had to be abandoned because of 'gross pollution' from untreated sewage. They have bored four wells at Earith but other sites did not produce results so the only alternative was to buy water in bulk, although this means laying 12 miles of mains.

1954 02 11

Councillors discussed the delay in the installation of a water supply for Longstowe. One said: "During this spot of bad weather I was ashamed to see children going along before school early in the morning, carrying sacks containing bottles of water for cooking and for washing. Some are having to walk over a mile". It had been hoped to start the scheme in 1952 – were they going to have to wait another six years. If the consulting engineers were no good why not throw them out and get some new ones, they asked. But the scheme had been changed so many times it was not fair to blame the Engineers

1954 03 01

The Cambridge Water Company is to start work immediately on a new five-million-gallon reservoir on Lime Kiln Hill which will double the reserves of water. Rainfall during the winter months had been substantially below average and the replenishment of underground water storage severely diminished. A low rainfall next year might endanger their ability to maintain supplies during periods of peak demand. Improvement had also been made to the Fulbourn Pumping Station where new machinery would soon be installed; this will afford temporary relief from the situation where demand for water had equalled their maximum yield

1954 07 01

Some villages have been 'jumping the queue' with main sewerage ahead of Cottenham, a councillor claimed. They had been promised a main drainage scheme some 25 years ago and the drains are in such a deplorable condition that nothing can be done. Their only sanitary accommodation is an open cesspool a few feet from the kitchen door. With all the new development sewage was the utmost priority. But there were major problems at Lt Shelford where 47 per cent of people don't have sinks in their homes and this was a matter of urgency on public health grounds. Pampisford was promised

water seven years ago but the village is still not supplied & now Whittlesford parish council has also asked why slow progress was being made there

1954 07 07

South Cambs RDC proposed a development which would change the face of the old-world village of Litlington. They want to develop a nine-acre ex RAF Communal Site as a permanent housing site and replace hutments which are classed as sub-standard accommodation by 50 non-traditional homes, mainly to rehouse the 'squatters'. The site is an eyesore but it has sewers, water pipes and foundations. Building would be fast and easy and the houses would be finished in about six months. But it is outside the village area, there were alternative sites and the land was needed for smallholders after clearance. It would destroy the character of the village and clash with the landscape.

1954 10 13

Fulbourn waterworks pumping station was reopened. Beneath the pump and control rooms is a 60,000-gallon tank. The pumps are driven by direct-current motors capable of pumping 90,000 gallons an hour to a jet chamber where dissolved carbon-dioxide is released, reducing corrosion. An efficient electricity supply and the duplication of all plant renders any breakdown almost impossible. A five-million gallon reservoir is under construction at Cherry Hinton which will bring water reserves up to two days instead of one as at present.

1954 10 22

A new pumping station was opened at Kingston. The first bore hole had been sunk by the old East Hunts Water Company in 1934. It was altered for R.A.F. purposes at the beginning of the last war and in 1943 the Chesterton and St Ives Joint Water Board was formed. Three years ago permission was obtained from the Ministry and the present buildings started. The original water supply came from Bourn from a station that was built in 1900 and the next erected at Longstanton in 1930. Now with the ever-increasing demand for water had come the new station.

1954 12 01

The Government is prepared to increase Cambridge's allocation of houses from 200 to 250 in 1955. The Council has already agreed to the erection of 100 houses by the Hundred Houses Society and a minimum of 100 houses a year should be provided for rehousing families displaced as a result of slum clearance. The City Surveyor drew attention to 12 houses in Victoria Road and 20 in Stanley Road which have no hot water supply, no bath or lavatory basin, nor a deep sink with trapped water. Hot water can only be obtained by means of solid fuel or gas copper.

1955 07 23

Housewives turning on their taps in Fulbourn, Teversham and the Wilbrahams found the softened water, for which they have asked so long, flowing into their sinks, baths and washtubs. Cherry Hinton water softening station opened in 1935 but the laying of a new main from Fleam Dyke Pumping Station was stopped by the war and finally finished only four days ago. 55 07 23

1955 09 02

The Government has approved Haverhill's town expansion scheme which involves the transfer of 5,000 of London's 'overspill' population. Now planning can begin for the additional plant needed at the waterworks and sewage farm to deal with the increased population and demands of industry. 55 09 02a

1955 11 04

Tenants of council houses at Westmoor Common, Little Downham, have to look for rat holes to pour waste water in because they have no sink or drains of any description. All that was needed were a few glazed pipes as there was a septic tank. But there was no way of installing them without a comprehensive scheme which would be too expensive. Seven years ago a similar scheme was proposed at Lt Thetford but nothing had been done there either. It was wrong that there were council houses without sinks when they were spending money on modern houses. 55 11 04-a

1955 11 17

Cam valley water supply scheme – 55 11 17b

1955 11 18

Cheveley Park water supply, warning – 55 11 18

1956 02 20

Cambridgeshire was hit by the second arctic spell over the weekend. Snow, ice and biting winds brought treacherous conditions to many of the roads, but no major accidents were reported. Last night the temperature dropped to 18 degrees, at 9am today it was 25.7. The Waterworks Company dealt with over 1,000 burst pipes over the last cold spell and expect there will be many more when the pipes thaw out after the present freeze-up. 56 02 20a

1956 07 20

Samples of water taken from the River Ouse at Huntingdon after many fish were killed on the Newton stretch of the river contained traces of cyanide. It came from the normal effluent discharge from Huntingdon Council's septic tank at Hartford. No other sources of pollution were found and the only chemical spraying was using a non-toxic weed killer. It was important that the district pollution prevention officer should be on the telephone, but the Post Office did not have the necessary equipment. 56 07 20b

1956 08 04

A ten-year old boy from No.7 hut, Carlton Green was drowned when he went, with other children, swimming in an emergency water tank at the old W.A.A.F. site at Weston Colville. The Fire Brigade was called and recovered the body after pumping the water from the tank. The coroner will hold an inquest at Linton police station. 56 08 04b

1957 02 25

The Cambridge Waterworks Company announced two new developments. Zeolite, which removes the hardness-forming calcium from water, is to be replaced by a new plastic material which is expected to double the output of softened water. Then a new pumping station at Wilbraham will pump up to 1,250,000 gallons a day. Although some consumers have seen the cost of water increase by more than £1 a year it still represents outstanding value for money. 57 02 25

1957 03 02

Sir - For the past one hundred years Swaffham Prior has had a fountain of pleasing and unusual design. It was circular, built of brick and crowned with a steeply pitched conical roof. Generations used it for the refreshment of men and beasts. Sheep-dogs lapped up water, wayfarers stopped to admire it. But a few days ago, with no warning, it was demolished and the materials carted away. Who is responsible for this vandalism? – Aquarius. 57 03 02b

1952 05 13

Shudy Camps' bright clean, one-roomed school, which houses 20 children, means a lot to the inhabitants. They have a good teacher in Doris Edwards but no mains water supply. Now it may close with the pupils sent to Castle Camps. But with four new council houses and two more being built there will be more children. In these modern days you must have community spirit. Take the school away and what focal point is left? Just the church and the pub. 52 05 13 &a –b

1957 07 05

The motor vessel 'Phosphorous' lazily riding at her moorings off the 'New Spring' pub is the perfect answer to Cambridge's housing difficulties. It does have disadvantages: all the washing-up water must be pumped from the river and boiled while drinking water has to be obtained and conserved in a tank in the bows. But when the owners are cruising the river it is not an empty house that callers see, just a clear view of the opposite bank. 57 07 05a

1957 07 07

The water situation in Duxford is critical. Last year 40 of the 63 satisfactory wells dried up. Miss Harriet Hewitt, 74, says her well had dried up and she has to go to a pump 250 yards away to fetch water. Mrs Pamela James in St John's Street who has two small children has to get her water from a pump 200 yards from her home four times a day. The District Council says a piped supply from Dotterell Hall is expected in autumn. 57 07 07 & a

1957 07 13

Duxford water cartoon – 57 07 13b

1958 02 07

A new effluent purification plant at Spicers factory, Sawston, not only makes waste water drinkable but the sludge which is left behind is pumped out and converted into a paper mache texture which is used to make egg packing cases. It is the first system to achieve complete recovery of valuable raw material which would otherwise literally go down the drain and prevent river pollution. 57 10 04a
Stapleford water borehole – 58 02 07

1958 03 03

Cambridge Water Company originally hoped the new Great Wilbraham pumping station would help meet the ever-growing demand, even in times of severe drought, until 1965. But the experiences of last summer have prompted a less optimistic view and they were sinking a trial bore near Stapleford. They are also moving from Bene't Street, where they have been since 1866, to new offices in Rustat Road. 58 03 03

1958 05 02

Pampisford is to keep its parish pumps until they fall into a state of disrepair even after the village gets a mains water supply. Some people think the pump water is better water and there is a good supply. They were put in in comparatively modern times and are in good working order. They might be extremely useful should there be another war and bombs hit the mains. 58 05 02a

1958 09 20

Cambridge Water Company opened its new office block in Rustat Road. It was formed 106 years ago by twelve townsmen and ten prominent members of the University and now supplies 120,000 people. There was an exhibition of nylon sink tops, Perspex baths and fibre glass cisterns instead of the old-fashioned ones made of galvanised iron. 58 09 20a

1959 01 16

The number of calls for assistance received by the Cambridge Waterworks Company from householders whose water supply pipes have burst was 90 per cent down on those received during the last big freeze-up of 1954. This is put down to good publicity about 'lagging' pipes, warmer houses due to the increase in the sale of heaters and the de-rationing of coal, and the warning to Council House owners that they would have to pay for all damage caused to pipes and installations by frost. The number of calls for assistance received by the Cambridge Waterworks Company from householders whose water supply pipes have burst was 90 per cent down on those received during the last big freeze-up of 1954. This is put down to good publicity about 'lagging' pipes, warmer houses due to the increase in the sale of heaters and the de-rationing of coal, and the warning to Council House owners that they would have to pay for all damage caused to pipes and installations by frost 59 01 16

1959 02 04

The new Heydon reservoir will provide a water supply for 11 parishes. It was in 1954 that SCDC sank a trial borehole at Dottrell Hall, Fowlmere. Subsequently two more were constructed and it was proposed to build a pumping station, lay 42 miles of trunk mains and construct the reservoir. Councillors inspected the interior before the great covered-in space was filled with water. 59 02 04b

1959 06 25

Castle Camps water shortage – 59 06 25a

1959 10 14

Cambridge Waterworks Company has managed full unrestricted supplies throughout every drought when elsewhere in the country water has been rationed. But in July torrential rain caused electric power failures which cut out the pumps at Fulbourn and Great Wilbraham. It also flooded the basement of the Fleam Dyke Pumping Station and thousands of gallons of oily water drained back into the well, causing pollution. Despite all this they still maintained supplies from the reservoirs at Cherry Hinton. 59 10 14 & a

1959 10 28

Willingham water supply – 59 10 28 & a

1960 04 12

The Leys School, having passed through the stages of war-time requisition and evacuation and the post-war restrictions on building, is now undertaking a large programme of building expansion. Extra science laboratories have been built and the kitchens, gymnasium and the swimming baths modernised. Now West House is to be completely re-accommodated in a new modern building on the edge of the playing fields overlooking Coe Fen. Builders lorries are passing in and out of the gates with busy regularity. Self-contained as it is – with its own chapel and theatre and even its own water supply – it arouses the curiosity of passers by. 60 04 12a

1960 05 13

There was grave concern at the serious water shortage in Willingham where the supply was old and inadequate for modern needs. Some houses are completely without water for many hours during the day and growers cannot irrigate their glasshouse plants. The trunk main passed near the village and the Ramsey Board had agreed that a supply could be taken from it to relieve the problem until the system was overhauled and both the quantity and the pressure brought up to a reasonable standard. 60 05 13a

1960 06 01

The shortage of water at Willingham is entirely due to people using it for irrigating their smallholdings, says Chesterton RDC. There is more than adequate for domestic needs but all last summer it was run away on the land night and day. When people wanted to fill their kettles and have a wash in the morning there was none to be had. The irrigation lines were wasteful – they did not just watered plants but in between rows as well. 60 06 01

1960 09 15

The new Dottrell Hall Pumping Station, which is to supply water for South Cambridgeshire's comprehensive water supply scheme is nearing completion. Water mains have been laid at Pampisford and Babraham with Fowlmere and Thriplow to follow. But residents of Gamlingay Heath who petitioned for extensions to their village sewers will be disappointed. The scheme would cost £500 for every house served and would not be approved by the Ministry 60 09 15

1960 11 01

Every village in South Cambridge RDC area now has a mains water supply with the opening of the Dottrell Hall Pumping Station. Previously eleven villages had to rely on shallow wells and hand pumps. These tended to dry up in times of drought and the water had to be boiled as it was considered unfit by modern standards. The new station has a maximum demand of 630,000 gallons of beautiful water. It had cost a lot of money but was worth it 60 11 01a

1961 05 12

Chesterton and St Ives Joint Water Board to transfer water undertakings to Cambridge University & Town Waterworks Company – 61 05 12a

1961 07 13

Haddenham water supply not serious – 61 07 13

1961 07 22

Cambridge Water Company opens new pumping station at Babraham – 61 07 22

1962 01 06

Water undertakings administered by local authorities in St Ives, Ramsey, Chesterton and South Cambridgeshire are to be transferred to the Cambridge University and Town Waterworks Company – 62 01 06a

1962 01 06

Cambridge Waterworks Company dealt with 1,500 burst pipes and 20 burst mains during the big freeze-up. At the peak of the trouble a team of 36 men were working 12-15 hours a day. The most serious flooding was where householders had gone away for the Christmas holiday. Plumbers had to show considerable self-discipline in declining offers of liquid and solid refreshment. But one lady called urgently for help only to turn away the plumber with the request that he call again when the weather was fine – and when he had cleaned his boots! 62 01 06b

1962 05 16

The Littleport and Downham Drainage Commissioners first met at the Club Hotel, Ely, in 1756 and it was there they gathered for a celebration luncheon before driving five miles to Oxloade for the opening of a £65,000 all electric pumping station. Lord De Ramsey switched on two 320 hp motors capable of discharging 270 tons of water a minute. Together with two diesel-driven pumps they will serve one-third of the area they administer. Two more stations will be built near Denver Sluice and at Littleport to bring a big improvement to land that was suffering from poor drainage through the gradual wastage of the peat. 62 05 16

1962 06 01

Willingham often finds itself with a very low water pressure because so much water is required for the village's extensive irrigation systems and its large quantity of glasshouses which almost outnumber the houses. In 1912 the Willingham Water and General Supply Company was established. They built a water tower and installed pipes and pumps, making it one of the most important horticultural areas in the region. Chesterton RDC took over responsibility in 1955 and has agreed with the Ramsey and St Ives Joint Water Board for additional supplies in an emergency. 62 06 01b

1962 06 22

The shortage of water in Huntingdon has become so serious that the Borough Surveyor has warned residents that supplies may be cut off in parts of the town for selected periods. The level in the water tower has reached such a low level that there is insufficient pressure to reach the higher buildings. The Fire Brigade is pumping water to the County Hospital to enable it to carry on and workmen may be laid off at the Silent Channel Company's factory, where car accessories are manufactured. The villages of Brampton, Ellington, Easton and Spaldwick might soon be entirely without supplies. 62 06 22

1962 06 28

St Ives water shortage very serious – 62 06 28

1962 07 02

Longstowe villagers are angry that their water was completely shut off for three days. At midnight just a trickle of water came through allowing people to fill buckets and cans. Postmistress Mrs A.M.

Prewett was constantly asked to telephone the District Council. They said the water was only shut off at night but the heavy demand was too great for the main, resulting in the daytime shortage. It was not until the Fire Brigade arrived with containers that the water came on in the taps. Gamlingay and several other villages also experienced difficulties. 62 07 02

1962 11 15

St Neots council is negotiating for a 'well-known national brewery' to set up works in the town. The company would use road and rail transport and provide employment for 80 people. But the supply of water required – 120,000 gallons a day – will not be available for two years and there is a problem over industrial effluent which would place too heavy a burden on the sewerage works 62 11 15d

1963 01 18

Giant earth scrapers are advancing in the soft clay at the bottom of one of Huntingdonshire's most beautiful natural valleys near Diddington. Soon millions of gallons of fresh water will be pumped over ploughed land and pasture until the valley becomes a three-mile long reservoir, the largest man-made lake in the country. The hamlets of Grafton and East and West Perry lay clear of the water line but seven farmhouses and six cottages will be submerged. The new lake will be used for sailing and provide a rowing course to Olympic standards. But water ski-ing will not be allowed as oil from towing craft might cause pollution 63 01 18

1963 01 22

The water position in Huntingdon is very grave and supplies may need to be cut. It is essential that householders do not leave their water taps running overnight – a practice which some people adopt to prevent taps from freezing – 63 01 22

1963 01 25

Huntingdonshire schools closed due frost – frozen lavatories and water mains – 63 01 25

1963 02 16

Haverhill to abstract water from Bartlow – 63 02 16

1963 04 01

Cambridge Water Company has become responsible for public water to the areas previously supplied by the Borough of St Ives, Ramsey UDC and the Rural Districts of Chesterton, South Cambs and St Ives. 63 04 01a & b

1963 04 23

Someone misread a map and gave the wrong name to what will be Britain's biggest man-made lake after 1,700 acres of Hunts countryside is flooded by water from the Great Ouse. Seven farms and 20 houses will be inundated by the lake's 13 thousand million gallons which are urgently needed to supply water to neighbouring counties. The Great Ouse Water Authority had decided to call it Diddington Reservoir but after protests from Grafham villages agreed it had been wrongly named. 63 04 23a

1963 06 07

Grafham Water construction work progress – 63 06 07a

1963 12 20

St Ives Sand and Gravel Company started in 1937 and is now one of the leading producers of aggregates in the country. It works at about 18 pits including Earith, Fen Drayton, Wimblington, Chippenham and Mepal, in the river terrace gravels of the Ouse Valley. One pit at Meadow Lane St Ives was a football field two years ago and has now been dug out to a depth of about 20 feet and left flooded. Filling in is a problem for this must be done with clean material which must not pollute the water supply. On the other side of the road enormous shovels have created cliff-like sides streaked in brilliant orange and chrome. 63 12 20a

1964 02 26

Ely reservoir and booster pump being built for Ely, Mildenhall & Newmarket Water board – 64 02 26a

1964 03 19

A new town for 100,000 people at Stansted is proposed in the Government study of the problems of development during the next 20 years. The decision will depend on the establishment of a third international airport for London. If it came it would provide the initial impetus for a new town. One of the factors is water supply which might be expensive to obtain and have an unfortunate effect on existing supplies from the River Lee 64 03 19

1964 05 07

Diddington farmers compensation fears over Grafton water – 64 05 07c

1964 06 15

Cambridge housing squalor – squatters; 500 houses have no hot water, 5,000 no bath, 640 no flush lavatories – 64 06 15a

1964 09 24

Cambridge Water & Lee Valley Water Company sink boreholes at Melbourn to ensure water supply, fear might dry up source of Cam at Ashwell – 64 09 24c

1964 12 21

Grafham Water being filled – feature on history of Diddington reservoir – 64 12 21b

1965 03 13

Melbourn old water pump discovered – 65 03 13a

1965 03 26

The Wash can be reclaimed by dumping 10,000,000 tons of ash from the Electricity Generating Board's coal-fired generating station into it each year, W.E. Doran claims. It would greatly increase the rate of land reclamation but care would have to be taken to ensure shipping channels were not impeded and that silt came in over the layers of ash to make the land agriculturally fertile. However this may be so expensive that it is not practical and water storage would be more worth while 65 03 26a

1965 04 23

Cambridge Water Company cautions over drought prospects – 65 04 23e

1965 07 22

Willingham smallholders claim level of water in wells affected by water pumping, some wells have dried up – 65 07 22a

1966 09 23

Great Ouse River Authority open new HQ at Gt Ouse House, Clarendon Road; will be shortage of water; formed in 1920 to take over work Bedford Level Corporation – 66 09 23a

1971 12 07

King' Hedges School water tower erected – 71 12 07b

1972 07 27

By throwing out plans to fluoridate Huntingdon and Peterborough's water supply, the county council have only postponed the day for two years. Because when the new health authorities take over, there is little doubt that fluoride will be in every water supply in England & Wales. Their decision means that for the sake of having no fluoride in the water supplies to a small part of the area around St Ives

and Ramsey, they have denied fluoride to almost 200,000 people in the Cambridgeshire & Isle of Ely area. This is because both councils were linked in a £68,000 plan to be carried out by the Cambridge Water Company

1972 09 23

The introduction of a computer has brought the board's accounting right up to date and saved the work of half a person, the Clerk to Ely, Mildenhall and Newmarket Water Board told members yesterday. Mr J.W. Robins said that for the first time he could remember all accounting was up to date and the stores programme and accounts were to be transferred to the machine as soon as possible. He said the equivalent of half a person's duties had been taken over, but there had been no redundancy because somebody was still needed to answer the telephone.

1972 10 12

Comberton's village pond has dried up. And the famous group of wild mallard which live there have flown away. The pond has dried entirely only for a week in the driest of summers before. This time it has been dry for three months. The chairman of the Parish Council, Mr William Watts, suggests that trench-digging around the village to install main drainage, has stopped up the flow of surface water into the pond. He said "We are worried about the situation but we'll wait until there has been a real good fall of rain to see what happens before we actually do anything about the lack of water. If the water does not run into the pond then, we might have to consider sinking a well or something. The village pond is a real amenity"

1972 10 26

On wash days Mrs Marlene Bassett walks up and down her garden about 50 times a day emptying buckets of water. The only tap in the house is a cold one which runs into a sink. The sink has no drain - the slops from it have to be collected in a bucket and taken to the end of the garden. She lives in a row of four three-bedroomed houses which have no hot water, no bathrooms, no drains and outside the kitchen door is the lavatory, a metal bucket under a wooden seat. They are at Wenden Lofts and the owners of the houses are Saffron Walden Rural Council. The Clerk of the rural council said: "These were some of the first of the council houses ever built and they were very good council houses, but they want modernising. As villages get sewered so we modernise houses and put them on the sewer"

1973 03 16

Cambridge Water Company may appeal to gardeners and car washers to ration their water this summer, after the lowest winter rainfall for many years. The deputy manager of the Company said "We are in the situation where in March we are down to end-of-summer levels. We have had about only one half of our normal rainfall. And only a quarter of that has got through to the underground strata. We usually get ten inches of rainfall in the six winter months. This year, after five months, we have only had five inches"

1973 04 03

A rota for extracting water from rivers for crop irrigation and controls on the use of domestic water are among the suggestions put forward by farmers to counteract the water shortage crisis in the Great Ouse River basin. Mr Derek Crawley stressed that farmers argued it seemed unfair that there should be a ban on supplies which were needed for their livelihood when there were no controls on car washing or garden hoses. The river authority pointed out that it is important to keep river flows to a certain level in order that there was the necessary level of dilution to check pollution and ensure the dilution of sewage outlets into the rivers. Already the Ouse at Denver is the lowest since 1934 when records started

1973 04 18

Cambridge water reserves are now lower than at the end of a normal summer, Cambridge Water Company disclosed yesterday. Officials who have been monitoring supply and demand very carefully during the exceptionally dry winter are now hoping for the sort of summer deluge which will make

garden hoses redundant and car washing a waste of time. The average Cambridge rainfall is 22 inches a year but in the 12 months ended March 31st there were only 13 inches. A spokesman said "We are certainly lower than at any time on record and we don't know just how our sources will react. But there is no cause for alarm at the moment

1973 04 21

Every day 83-year old Mr Percy Hoare picks up his buckets and makes his way cautiously along 30 yards of uneven path to collect his daily ration of water. Should he glance up as he fills the buckets from a stand pipe he might be excused a cynical smile. For just a few feet in front of him is a brand new pumping station of the Lee Valley Water Company which each day pumps thousands of gallons of fresh water all over the district. But not to Percy : he and the nine other residents of Silver Row at Wendens Ambo near Saffron Walden are still waiting for the water to be connected to their homes. His landlord points out that the rents were very low. Mr Hoare pays £11.68 rent for six months

1973 05 18

More than a thousand farmers and industrialists through Mid Anglia are being sent warning letters telling them they may be ordered to reduce their water consumption next month. A clampdown on the amount of water used for farm irrigation is now being seriously contemplated. Rainfall over the last year has been almost the lowest on record and now there are fears that the quality of Mid Anglia rivers may reach crisis point during the hot summer months unless action is taken soon

1973 06 20

Mid-Anglia revelled in rain last night. Nearly one-and-a-half inches soaked the area - about a quarter of this year's total rainfall - and although there was some damage to crops and minor flooding in country areas, farmers said that the rain came just in time to save the threat of poor crops. The downpour also helped the water shortage temporarily but a water board spokesman said: "No-one should think they can go ahead and use all the water they can. We are still in difficulties". The only flooding of any proportion was at Duck Lane, St Neots, a notorious spot for trapping water

1974 03 15

In barely twenty minutes the chairman, Mr Leonard Childs, pushed sentiment and nostalgia firmly aside ... and by the close of the meeting the Great Ouse River Authority was dead and buried. It seemed ambitious when vested with wider powers to replace the Great Ouse River Board in 1964. The board replaced the drainage boards dating back to 1920, which replaced smaller units ... and so on back into shrouded fenland history. The momentum of change gathers pace with the advent of the new Anglian Water Authority bringing a new dimension not only to water and drainage but sewage as well.

1974 04 02

Water services have undergone a sweeping change. The new governing body is the Anglian Water Authority, who are now responsible for services previously administered by the river authorities, water boards and local authorities in a huge area. In Mid Anglia they have taken over responsibilities previously carried out by 22 authorities. Cambridge Water Company will continue to have delegated powers catering for the needs of nearly 300,000 consumers

1974 04 10

There has been less than 1½th of an inch of rain during the last 21 days – and that was before the drought period began 18 days ago. Yet the subterranean water table is showing a considerable improvement on its level at the same time last year when there was an eight-inch deficit. "It will probably be a matter of two years before we get back to the level which existed two years ago", said a Water engineer

1974 06 20

Farmers may face compulsory restrictions in their use of river water this summer because of the acute water shortage. Rain last winter was again well below average and the water shortage suffered last

year could be expected again. The worst time was likely to be during the spray-irrigation season when farmers will be taking large quantities of water from the rivers to water their crops. A special watch will need to be kept to make sure that sewage treatment is kept to the highest possible standard as the level in rivers drops.

1974 07 04

Projecting a good public image is going to cost the Anglian Water Authority £40,000 in publicity, exhibitions, printing and recruiting propaganda – right down to £500 for grooming leading spokesmen on how to give television interviews. A Lincolnshire delegate said: “I think this may be a little excessive at the moment, bearing in mind the hard times we are living in”

1974 09 10

Anglian Water Authority have asked Souths Cambs district council to refuse permission for any new development and severely restrict building in a further 19 because of the overloading of the sewage treatment works, Milton, whose drains lead into the Cambridge works has suffered from a development embargo for the last four years. It is now joined by Shelford, Girton, Histon and Fen Ditton where a complete ban on development is requested. At Over, Gamlingay and Bassingbourn permission will only be given to one-building application. All of these sewage works have been badly overloaded for some time but the cuts in public spending have prevented AWA from going ahead with extension schemes

1974 10 14

Haverhill firemen had to mop up 30 homes in the town centre after a water main burst. Water erupting from the main in Crowland road sent a four-foot waves sweeping 400 yards down the road. The force of the water buckled the road surface and caused a crater over the entire width. Mud and rubble was swept down the roads and into homes. This is the second time that the main has burst

1975 04 04

More than 40,000 people in the Huntingdon and St Neots areas are running a higher than average risk of drinking contaminated water. An Anglian Water Authority spokesman said water supplied from the Brampton treatment works could be hit by “lightning pollution”. The works take part of its supply direct from the River Ouse just before treatment, so any pollution in the river goes straight into the plant. For many years there has been problems with the drinking water supplied by Brampton, because there were not sufficient storage facilities.

1975 04 08

Long term predictions about water shortages are beginning to look slightly off key as national population forecasts plummet. Only a few years ago ambitious plans were being made to swamp vast areas of good agricultural land in order to keep pace with demand. Now it looks like a false alarm. Plans for reservoirs like those at Abbotsley, St Neots, and Gt Bradley, Haverhill, rarely come out for a dusting. Even the Wash reservoir scheme may prove a costly indulgence. Population statistics have always been notoriously unpredictable. In the Eastern region the authority will probably have to cater for a 2001 population of nearly 7 ½ million against the present 5 million

1975 08 20

The controversial plan for a multi-million pound nuclear power station at Molesworth has been dropped. The Central Electricity Generating Board say the availability of water in the area would restrict generating capacity. Economic considerations and problems arising from the foundation conditions also helped them reach their conclusion.

1975 10 11

Denver Sluice, one of the great monuments of fenland engineering and a vital control point in the flood threats of the past, could soon be something of a white elephant. Its fate hinges on an investigation being carried out into the level of silt build-up in the Great Ouse River basin which the sluice may have limited power to control. The river systems increasing use for fresh water supplies

through Grafham Water, the Ely-Essex water transfer project and proposals to regulate groundwater levels in the chalkland had reduced river flows and opened the possibility of silt coming in from the Wash.

1976 04 09

Cambridge Water Company consumers can expect to escape restrictions on water usage now being slapped on nearby areas. But that does not mean they can use water as freely as they like, even though they will probably not face the hosepipe ban imposed on the St Neots and Huntingdon area where the taps are fed mostly from dwindling surface reservoirs. They are up against acute difficulties if the summer is as dry as the past winter which had brought only two inches of rain since November

1976 04 28

Cambridge has gone through its driest winter for 54 years, according to records kept by the Water Company. And if the drought continues it could be the worst year this century. With the forecasters still predicting dry, cold weather water-users are being urged to economise wherever possible. The Anglian Water Authority is preparing contingency plans for an expected water crisis in the late autumn. Hosepipe bans have been introduced in the Huntingdon and St Neots area.

1976 04 29

The eleven-month long drought brought two strong warnings today. Water supplies to all homes in the Huntingdon and St Neots area will be cut off within three months unless people economise. Elsewhere the dry weather is threatening all rivers with sewage pollution. Downstream from the overloaded Cambridge sewage works the Great Ouse River Authority say the threat of wholesale sewage pollution was now "crucial".

1976 05 19

Cambridgeshire fire fighters are facing their biggest crisis in years as open water supplies throughout the county dry up. Previously they could have relied on open supplies like ponds and fen drains when fighting blazes in the county. Now they will have to summon water tankers to help them. The chief fire officer, Mr John Maxwell, said: "For the first time in many years supplies are so low they are not sufficient". Now urgent talks are being held with Cambridgeshire National Farmers Union in a bid to stop farmers burning straw and stubble later this year

1976 07 21

By 1981, the Cambridge Water Company is likely to be short of more than 1¼ million gallons of water a day. But the demand could be met if the Anglian Water Authority's proposed ground water development scheme is allowed to go ahead. Taking ground water from the chalk would help in two ways: the water could be added directly to the public supply and as it would maintain river flows in dry weather, more water can be taken from existing boreholes. By pumping water into springs and rivers it would ensure that effluent from sewage works was adequately diluted even in periods of drought.

1976 08 12

Cambridge Water Company has tentatively agreed to supply water in bulk to Anglian Water Authority areas north of St Ives. The operation would centre on a borderline area with Ramsey and Fenstanton on one side and Upwood and Hemingford Grey on the other. At a drought emergency conference it was announced that rationing would start in the Huntingdon and St Neots areas on October 11th, unless drastic action is taken by the public to conserve supplies.

1976 08 12

A natural spring that has supplied a Whittlesford home for more than 50 years without a break has dried up. Now the occupant of The Moors has to have water brought to her home in a tank for the 40 dogs boarded at her kennels. At present she baths at a friend's home and has to use a 50-gallon tank to store the water. Cambridge Water Authority say it would cost hundreds of pounds to have a standpipe

fitted because of the distance from the road. As she had never asked to go on the mains before and had opted for a private supply she was “subject to the vagaries of nature”

1976 08 13

The Anglian Water Authority has called for police protection for the men who may have to tour parts of Cambridgeshire, cutting off householders’ water. “We would not be so dramatic as to say we are expecting water riots, but we need to cover every eventuality”, said a Deputy Manager. “Situations could arise where a lot of excitement could be generated and the presence of the police may serve to keep the situation calm”. The Chief Constable, Mr Frederick Drayton Porter said: “There might be a bit of shouting and heckling but most people realise the crisis we face and will react sensibly”

1976 08 13

Householders in the Huntingdon and St Neots area will be two-time losers if water rationing is forced on them during October. Not only will they suffer a lack of water, but at the end of the emergency they will have to pay part of a £90,000 bill. This would be the cost to cut off 13,000 homes and introduce standpipes in the area. It does not include any county council spending on police, fire and social services.

1976 08 20

The scheme to reverse the flow of the River Ouse from Ely to Huntingdon is likely to upset boat owners and people living near the river; there could be noise from pumps at locks, and smell in the tidal part of the river. The scheme, a bid to offset the impact of the drought crisis, will mean closing seven locks to navigation between Earith and Offord. If it goes according to plan about 30 million gallons of water a day will be pumped into Grafham Water.

1976 08 26

A rescue operation has been mounted at the University Botanic Garden to save fish from a lake which is drying up. The lake, one of the main scenic attractions, started to fall about ten days ago and dozens of fish, mostly larger roach, dace and chub, have been transferred to the nearby fountain pond. Now they are threatened by swooping herons. The lake is normally fed by Hobson’s Conduit, but all but one of the springs at Nine Wells has now dried up and even the one that is active has been reduced to a trickle.

1976 08 27

Nothing is more likely to inflame feelings now that we are being urged to wash our smalls in the bath than the sign of a sprinkler spilling precious water over Parker’s Piece, Cambridge, under the heat of the noonday sun. Because the issue has aroused so much controversy City Council officials checked with Cambridge Water Company & were told that “watering for survival” is permissible; the wickets on the public cricket pitches are kept watered to prevent accidents. College gardens are among the most famous tourist attractions and until a ban comes into operation most colleges are watering those parts which they feel are most prized.

1976 09 07

Ancient village pumps could creak back into action if the drought crisis deepens. The idea has been put forward by Pampisford parish council which has decided to call in experts to see if its own village pumps can be put into working order. There are probably more than 100 pumps in the district, many sadly neglected and dilapidated. Some date back around a hundred years and almost all are out of working order after falling into disrepair with the introduction of piped water supplies to the rural areas. Since local councils lost responsibility for water supplies there has been a long-running dispute about their ownership though there is usually a tremendous row if anybody wants to get rid of them.

1976 09 14

Although river flows have started to recover as a result of the weekend rainfall the Anglian Water Authority is sticking to its stand-by programme of controls in the Huntingdon and St Neots areas. But for the first time for many months it has been possible to pump water from the River Ouse into

Grafham reservoir, which is an important source of water for the area. Director of Operations, Mr Geoffrey Bowyer said: "We need another six inches of rain fairly shortly to bring us back to anything like normal". The drought minister, Mr Denis Howell is to visit the area to inspect a focal point of the £200,000 reversal scheme at Earith.

1976 09 29

Pure, clear water is what everyone who uses Fen Drayton village hall should be getting from now in. But for almost 40 years they have been drinking unsafe water – and no-one even guessed or showed the slightest sign of poisoning. Villagers found that their water came from the nearby Land Settlement Association reservoir, where it is used mainly for watering crops. A Cambridge Water Company inspector discovered it wasn't fit to drink. It only came to light when the estate turned off supplies at night to conserve water during the drought, and the village hall taps ran dry.

1976 09 30

Plans to ease the water shortage in the Huntingdon area are being held up because there is too much water in the River Ouse to bring the unique £200,000 flow-reversal scheme into operation. Graham Water is already being recharged much faster than it is being emptied. Up to a few weeks ago the flow was so low that the reservoir pumps had been idle for weeks. Now they are putting in up to 50 million gallons a day as a result of the heavy rainfall which has swollen the Ouse River system. As the Graham pumps can only handle up to 100 million gallons a day there is no safety margin to allow the trial pumping to begin

1976 09 30

It is NOT the driest summer in the Cambridge area for 500 years, or even 250 years – and that is official. Cambridge Water Company strongly suspected the statisticians were becoming over-excited. Now its doubts have been confirmed. Weathermen have been forced to admit that the months from October 1920 until November 1921 were even drier; during that time there were 13.4 inches of rain in the Cambridge area, compared to 15 inches in the same period up to the end of June this year

1976 10 29

The long dry summer and drought emergency measures do not appear to have influenced experts studying the possibility of storing fresh water in the Wash. Their main conclusions are the storage reservoirs are unlikely to be required this century. A more immediate improvement could be to abstract residual flows from the rivers Great Ouse and Nene which could provide additional supplies of up to 75 million gallons per day, at a relatively low cost. Since 1970 predictions of population growth and future demands for water have dropped significantly

1977 02 11

Reservoirs planned for Abbotsley and Great Bradley are no longer shelved. They were temporarily abandoned when the Government gave in to pressure for a Wash feasibility study. A decline in population, coupled with high costs have meant that any such scheme is now unlikely so Anglian Water Authority engineers are looking at the schemes again to find out how they compare in cost. Any revival of the Great Bradley scheme will be met with bitter opposition. When the plans to flood the 200-acre valley were first proposed 10 years ago the parish made the strongest protests possible and villagers believed the threat to their livelihood was dead. At Abbotsley parish councillors promised there would be violent opposition to the plan.

1977 04 19

There may be treasure at the bottom of the garden at the Red House pub in Longstowe. Or on the other hand there may well not be. The landlord, Mr Rex Ford, is finding out – with the help of a team of expert divers. They spent six hours in the icy water but didn't reach the bottom after 90 feet & were forced to abandon the hunt having reached the limit of their decompression exposure time. They did find a large antique key on a ledge. George Hughes, aged 70, remembers drawing water from the well when a boy to power steam traction engines. "That is one of the deepest wells hereabouts and is reckoned to be over 300 years old", he said.

1977 10 06

Hopes of bringing mains sewerage connections to isolated villages are no nearer being realised. The only exception being allowed by the Anglian Water Authority arises when the present conditions offer a health hazard. Coun Jack Warren said: "Conditions have got to be intolerable before we will do anything. I think we are a really stodgy lot. Sewage has got to be coming out of the taps before we will do anything". But the chairman said it was the Department of the Environment which had clamped down on pioneer rural schemes.

1978 03 16

A new reservoir at Abbotsley might never be needed. Speculation about the future of hundreds of acres of farmland has been rife since the area was put forward as a reservoir 14 years ago. But now it is felt that the water needs can be met by developing Grafham Water, and a number of other options ensure the idea will not even be considered until at least 2001. The key factor is the big fall in the rate of population growth. But planners are not completely ruling out the scheme, it is just not on the cards within many people's lifetime.

1978 08 23

A leakage of thousands of gallons of aircraft fuel at the Mildenhall American Air Force base may mean water supplies to 40,000 homes in the surrounding area will have to be cut off. The fuel is trapped underground near a bore-hole serving homes in the Ely and Littleport area. The Water Authority was informed on August 4th although the leakage had been discovered on July 18th when it was a kilometre from the bore-hole. Since then it had moved 200 metres but it was not clear whether it would eventually end up in the water supply. The oil is trapped in porous rocks and holes are being drilled to locate it. The USAF then hopes to pump the fuel to the surface.

1979 02 12

Sometime during the night of July 17th last year a one-inch fuel pipe running under Mildenhall air base fractured. It was only a small leak but it is only now that the disturbing consequences have become apparent. The fuel threatened a water bore hole that served the whole of Ely and Littleport and an emergency water pipe had to be laid. Although the pipeline is on an American air base, the British taxpayers will pay the bill which is likely to be in the region of half a million pounds

1979 03 15

It will be at least five years before the Central Electricity Generating Board makes up its mind on whether to build a new power station at Denver. Engineers have pointed out that any scheme which tunnelled water to the site from the coast could cost nearly twice the £45 million at present allowed for the project. Anglian Water Authority is worried about whether it will have enough water to meet the board's needs; using salt water could produce technical problems. The Denver site is suitable either for an oil, coal-fired or even a nuclear station, but is not being considered for the advanced reactor type. It is not likely to be started until the completion of Sizewell in Suffolk

1981 04 29

More than 8,000 old wells could be tapped if water supplies are threatened. But many have fallen into disuse, are capped or not officially recorded. The water could be quite usable since they are on underlying chalkland which acts as a great purifying agent but the Anglian Water Authority are concerned about the risk of pollution: it wouldn't do for them to distribute contaminated water. 81 04 29

1982 01 07

The Government has refused to pay any compensation for the massive pollution of water supplies which occurred after aircraft fuel leaked from tanks on the Mildenhall air base three years ago. One of the most productive water sources at Beck Row is still out of action and special pipelines have been laid to continue supplies. Now other toxic materials are threatening the underground reservoirs. It could cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to put right. 82 01 07

1982 11 30

Cambridge innovator Clive Sinclair is using well water to help heat his new headquarters building in Willis Road. Instead of cold tap water, the boiler uses water from a deep borehole which has already been pre-warmed, free of charge, with the heat from the centre of the earth. It is the first installation of its type in the country. Looking after the system is a Sinclair ZX81 computer. 82 11 30

1983 01 06

When Bessie Thurbon was born at the house in Sturton Street that is still her home, there was no electricity, bathroom or hot running water. And 76 years later, there still isn't. She is one of a handful of people in Cambridge whose homes are still lit by gas – but only in her sitting and living rooms plus one bedroom upstairs. The other rooms in the house are totally unlit. When they first started installing electricity in houses before the war her mother didn't want it. And Bessie has never got around to it.

83 01 06a

1983 02 04

More than 100 homes at Stretham had to rely on standpipes after a main burst. Some residents had to travel half a mile to the pipes in the High Street and Newmarket Road. But even that source dried up when severe overnight frost froze the pipes solid. A tanker was sent to deal with the emergency and ensure that the elderly and housebound get sufficient water. It is the biggest single problem facing Anglian Water which has 129 manual workers on strike. 83 02 04

1983 05 28

Saxon Street water tower is in process of being turned into a home. The metal tank which once housed millions of gallons of water has been insulated and equipped with a series of windows giving the master bedroom staggering views across the surrounding countryside. There is also a suspended platform built into the roof timbers approached by a steel ladder. It could house a bed – if one didn't mind the risk of rolling right off the platform. Although not totally complete it is on the market for £69,950. 83 05 28 p13

1985 06 17

The giant Fleam Dyke steam engines that supplied Cambridge's water for more than 50 years are slowly disappearing. The twin 180-horse-power horizontal engines, named Anderson and Lilley, stopped working back in 1976 and are now being dismantled for scrap. They were a showpiece for parties of visiting schoolchildren until a massive piece of machinery flew off. Now parts will be going to steam engine centres or sold to private buyers. They are just too big and expensive to move. 83 06 17 p24

1983 07 21

An emergency water tanker has been drafted in to Strethall, the village which 'dries up' every afternoon because of greater demand during hot weather. Residents have to carry pails of water from the tanker to their homes. The situation has been recurring for the past 10 years. "Its medieval to walk along carrying buckets of water – all you need is a water yoke" said Patricia Melford, whose husband is chairman of the parish meeting. The Water Company says the problem will be solved when improvements were carried out to the Wendons Ambo pumping station next summer. 83 07 21 p5

1984 07 10

A fleet of ambulances was called to evacuate 104 patients from Old Addenbrooke's Hospital after a water main burst in a ground floor room. The 240-year-old building, which is due to close in three months, has Victorian plumbing and no means could be found to deal with the burst without turning off the complete water supply. But water engineers managed to repair it. 84 07 10

1984 08 28

More than 2,500 campaigners joined the peace camp at the proposed missile base at Molesworth. The travelling roadshow of peace campaigners and environmentalists – collectively known as The Greens

– has become firmly established at the base. Diggers were brought in to construct toilets, standpipes were erected for water supplies and milk deliveries were arranged. A squad of workers were also erecting a peace chapel near the entrance to the base. 84 08 28 p10

1984 12 06

Jobless teenagers have helped restore the 140-year-old brick cowl covering an ancient spring at Holywell. It dates back to pre-Christian times and its waters had a wide reputation for their healing powers. They have also landscaped the area, planting 700 bulbs which will look marvellous in springtime. The village Horticultural Society dresses the well with flower mosaics consisting of thousands of petals in a ceremony which draws hundreds of visitors. 84 12 06a

1985 02 04

Two miners have been busily beaver away under one of Saffron Walden's main streets installing a water drainage system. The muffled rumble of traffic overhead can be heard above the noise of their machinery as they tunnel from the old pig market site across Hill Street to join the Slade, a 200-year-old brick-lined watercourse. Rats abound but luckily the noise of mining machinery keeps them at bay as miner Mick Clark is scared stiff of them 85 02 04

1985 03 02

Great Wilbraham has changed greatly since 1925. Things were primitive in those days: there was no electricity, indoor sanitation or tap water and the majority of people rented their homes from the village squire, Captain Reginald Hicks. Now Alec Sadler has constructed a scale model of it at that time. Great care has been taken to ensure its authenticity right down to the colour of the roofs and bricks. Being born in the village he has drawn on his own recollections together with those of older residents and has visited libraries and record offices in his research. 85 03 02

1986 05 08

Panic-stricken callers are jamming the switchboard of Addenbrooke's Hospital asking if they can be tested for signs of radioactivity after the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster. A monitoring service has been set up for people who have visited Eastern Europe and fear they may have been contaminated. But most of the calls are from Cambridge people who have not been abroad. Scientists assure them there is no cause for alarm and environmental health officials say it is unnecessary to test milk and water supplies in the city 86 05 08

1986 07 03

Gloucester Street off Castle Hill, Cambridge, has seen considerable changes in the last 60 years. Until 1924 it was a little estate of its own, with labourers' terraced cottages, a few semi-detached houses, a mission room and a pub. Today nothing remains of the old residential area. But Ronald Chapman has constructed a cardboard model of it which is on display in the Cambridgeshire Collection. Every house is detailed, the street lights are in the right place as are the three outside taps which supplied some householders with their only water 86 07 03

1986 07 01

Heatwave cuts water supplies to 1,000 homes in Steeple Bumpstead – 86 07 01a

1987 06 10

A water pumping station at Fulbourn is to be closed and replaced by two others costing £1 million. The old pumping station, which opened in 1888, will be sold raising money to offset the cost. It was too close to a built-up area, posing danger of pollution, and did not produce enough water. The new stations are at a field at the edge of the village and Weston Colville. 87 06 10

1987 08 27

The James Paine brewery which was established in St Neots Market Square in 1831 is to close and will become just a distribution depot. The last beer has been brewed at the premises and will be bottled in Ipswich. It will be marketed as the James Paine Final Brew in the autumn. The brewery has

been bought by Tolly Cobbold who wanted its six pubs. However the name will not die as they will still produce the beer, trying to emulate the original as closely as possible. With modern technology they can even match the local water which gave the beers their distinctive taste. 87 08 27

1987 10 01

If there was a disaster then a team of 600 community advisers would play their part in civil protection schemes. They are trained to deal with a crisis and help people pull together. They know about local radio hams, residents with expert knowledge and facilities such as wells, buildings which could be adapted into central feeding areas, make-shift accommodation or hospitals. The advisers, who include doctors, vicars, parish councillors and housewives backed up by 900 volunteers, are part of a civil protection initiative by the County Council. Now a series of 13 evening classes have been set up to train more 87 10 01b

1987 10 05

Village ponds could soon be extinct. They are disappearing at the frightening rate of one every ten days in Hertfordshire, according to a survey. And of those remaining more than 80 per cent are in poor biological condition. For years ponds provided a water supply and were a valuable habitat for animals and rare plants. However the introduction of piped water supplies, the decline of horses as working animals, land drainage and the intensification of farming have led to many being filled in. One that is facing extinction is Reed where the clay floor has cracked and the pond is drying up. 87 10 05

1988 05 18

Parts from the recently-closed water pumping station at Fulbourn may be sent to Ethiopia to pump water – 88 05 18a

1988 11 29

Chaos hit rush hour-traffic when a major spillage of dangerous chemicals blocked the A45 in both directions after a lorry overturned. Quick work by firemen prevented the hazardous chemicals forming poisonous clouds and getting into the water supply 88 11 29

1988 12 01

Fulbourn water pumping station was built by the Cambridge University & Town Waterworks Company in 1888. The pump was taken out of service last year. Now it may be turned into a house and four flats. Sale by auction 88 12 01b

1989 06 20

The heat wave has boosted demand for water to unprecedented levels, reducing supplies at the tap to a trickle in the Cambridge area. They have never had to restrict water in their 136-year history and have enough to cope with a 90-day drought, but with no end to the hot spell in sight, Cambridge Water is urging people to use water sparingly especially. Householders in Saffron Walden and Royston face a hosepipe ban. 89 06 20

1990 05 25

Cambridge Water Company state of emergency following mains burst – 90 05 25a